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New Statesman

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CHERNENKO

From cold war to deep freeze

PLUS:

Duncan Campbell & the Special Branch: the inside story

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New Statesman

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Duncan Campbell
He tells his own story of what happened when the Special Branch got hold of the contents of his bicycle panniers after an accident last week p.8

Cover drawing: John Minnion; photo: *The Observer*

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March 24: A Sponsored Day for El Salvador

March 24th 1984 is a sponsored day for El Salvador: groups all over Britain will be running, jumping, organising concerts, playing darts and jumping out of aeroplanes (with parachutes!) to support the fight for peace and justice in El Salvador.

The aim of the day is to raise money which can be sent to aid projects in the Liberated Zones of El Salvador, and used in campaigning work in Britain. The day is being organised by the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign: a non profit making organisation which campaigns to raise awareness of the situation in El Salvador, and to raise money to send to El Salvador.

March 24th has been chosen because it is the 4th anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was gunned down while saying mass by right wing Death Squads: his crime was his support for the popular rebellion in El Salvador, and his opposition to the terror of the army and the death squads.

In London we will be holding a 24-hour hunger strike to commemorate Romero's death and to protest against the holding of fraudulent elections on March 25th: elections which involve only right and extreme right parties, and whose likely winner is Major d'Abuisson – a death squad leader implicated in the murder of Archbishop Romero.

If your group would like to participate in the sponsored day, and would like help or advice, get in touch with the ELSSOC National Office. We can produce sponsor forms, give you ideas which have worked well in the past, and provide you with all the information you need on El Salvador. Please fill in the form below and return it to:

Sponsored Day
El Salvador Solidarity Campaign
29 Islington Park Street
London N1 (telephone enquiries on 01-359 3976)

Dear ELSSOC
I/We are interested in participating in the national sponsored day and

– would like to sponsor you on the El Savador hunger strike for an hour

– would like to organise a sponsored event for El Salvador. Please send me details.

– would like to make a donation to the work of the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign. I enclose a cheque/P.O. for £ made payable to ELSSOC.

Name .....
Address .....
.....
Phone No. .....

CIVIL LIBERTIES 1984

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the NCCL, the **New Statesman** will be publishing a special issue next week, 24 February, on the state of civil liberty in the UK.

This special issue will include

★ threats to civil liberties
★ restrictions in our society
★ proposals for reform
★ Freedom of Information
★ Police Bill, Data Protection, Bill of Rights, etc.

IF YOU OR YOUR ORGANISATION ARE INVOLVED WITH CIVIL RIGHTS this will be an ideal chance to state your views and publicise your campaign.

To advertise in this issue ring Stephen Mitchell on 01-253 2001. Deadline for bookings Friday, 17 February.

TO MAKE SURE OF A COPY PLACE AN ORDER AT YOUR NEWSAGENT

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New Statesman Vol 107 No 2761 17 February 1984

1911 to 1984

IN 1911 a ludicrous German spy scare swept the country, against a background familiar to those who have read Erskine Childers' *Riddle of the Sands*. Carried along by the hysteria, the (Liberal) government of the day rushed through Parliament with the most perfunctory consideration the now notorious Official Secrets Act.

It contained draconian powers of search, going far beyond the rules and conventions governing ordinary police behaviour. In particular, the right to search was not linked to the police having *prima facie* evidence of a crime. Any JP, if satisfied by information on oath that there is reasonable ground for suspecting that an official secrets offence has been or is about to be committed, can issue a search warrant to allow the police to enter any premises, if necessary by force. Once in, they can search both the premises and *anybody* they happen to find there. They do not have to say or even know what they are looking for. They can take any sketch, plan, model, article, note or document, or anything else that might be evidence that an official secrets offence has been or is about to be committed. And for good measure, if it appears to any police superintendent that the case is of great emergency and that 'in the interests of the State immediate action is necessary', he does not even have to bother with a JP and a formal oath. He can personally give any police officers power to act as if they had a search warrant.

The government in 1911 recognised that these were quite exceptional powers and that they posed a threat to civil liberty and personal privacy. In order to overcome these objections, ministers gave the most solemn and binding assurances in the House of Commons that they would only be used in circumstances where the security of the State was obviously and seriously threatened.

The history of the Official Secrets Act from that day to this is littered with examples of those undertakings being disregarded. Last week-end Duncan Campbell of the *New Statesman* was on the receiving end of the latest such example. There were certainly things in the bags of his bicycle that the police might want to ask him questions about. But the police did nothing of the sort. They have still not asked him one single question. In his view there is a proper explanation as to how he came by each of the documents that seem to be of interest to the police, which he could have expounded to them, if they had asked. But instead they seized the opportunity to go on a six-and-a-half hour 'fishing expedition' through his house, in the course of which they found nothing of the slightest significance (see his own account on page 8).

On Tuesday solicitors acting for Duncan Campbell demanded the immediate return of the property taken from his bicycle. On Wednesday, Scotland Yard agreed to return all the documents, except for three items which they are presumably claiming to be public property.

That question is not settled. But there is no suggestion that Duncan Campbell has committed an offence, let alone an offence for which he is to be charged. It would be difficult to conceive of a flimsier basis on which to issue a general search warrant. Once they had persuaded a Bow Street magistrate to grant a search warrant, the police were obviously acting within their powers (though we do not know what evidence they swore on oath in order to induce the JP to do so). But there could be no moral justification whatsoever for the way in which they behaved.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL was 'done over' under the Official Secrets Act. Here at least there is some constraint on the police. They make themselves look silly if they use powers under the act every day of the week and the record of prosecutions of journalists over the past two decades has been a public disaster for them. It is precisely for this reason that much greater public attention must be focused on the Police Bill now going through Parliament. For the effect of the Bill, if enacted in its present form, would be to make general, the wide powers of search and entry at present available only in cases where official secrets are alleged to be involved. At present the police are only entitled to enter and search where there is already *prima facie* evidence of a crime. Under the terms of the Bill they would have powers as with the Official Secrets Act, to get search warrants to search for evidence itself – regardless of whether they had a specific crime in view at the time. That, in effect, would give the police the right to go on general 'fishing expeditions' of a kind that until now at least the courts have considered to be an improper invasion of privacy and use of powers.

We should not plead specially for the way in which such a law would operate for journalism, for the much more fundamental question of the rights of *all* citizens is at stake. There have been attempts to make amendments to the Bill in committee to exclude material 'acquired for purposes of journalism' from the scope of the new powers. But there would be difficult problems of definition – and in any case the argument that journalists should have the same rights and duties as any citizen is very strong. But any newspaper, radio or TV office of any consequence always has material in it of interest as evidence to the police – both in their official secrets and general inquiries. The potential threat to the freedom of the press involved in the Bill is, therefore, substantial.

The government has gone out of its way to placate earlier objections to the Bill from particular interest groups like the professions. It has so far not listened to the general argument that it involves an encroachment of a civil liberty infinitely more serious even than the 1911 Official Secrets Act. It must now be made to. □

If you live in Manchester, Liverpool or Leeds . . .

Starting with the issue dated 24 February, the *New Statesman* will be on sale in the main city centre shops (station bookstalls, John Menzies, W. H. Smith, etc) in **MANCHESTER, LIVERPOOL** and **LEEDS** from **THURSDAY** mid-morning onwards. The *NS* has been available in London on Thursdays for many years and if this experiment is a success we hope to increase the number of provincial towns where we can offer this earlier distribution.

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Buying off charity tenants

LARGE CASH handouts are to be offered to housing association tenants in compensation for being deprived of the right to buy the house they are renting.

The government is introducing a clause into the Housing and Building Control Bill in the Lords next week that will give tenants of charitable housing associations the right to up to £25,000 cash to buy another home. Ministers had originally intended to extend the right to buy to the estimated 100,000 tenants of charitable housing associations who are eligible, but this part of the Bill was heavily defeated in the Lords last year following strong lobbying by the National Federation of Housing Associations (NFHA).

Now, the idea is to give these tenants a cash grant equivalent to the discount they would have got had they been allowed to buy their homes. The Bill will extend these discounts to a maximum of 60 per cent of the value of the property with the limit remaining at £25,000 and tenants will now qualify after two, rather than three, years.

Ray Walker, Director of the National Housing and Town Planning Council, has estimated that the cost of the scheme will be £24 million in the first year if just three per cent of those eligible take up the offer. 'It's such a fantastic deal that tenants are bound to make enormous efforts to try to profit from it. And it's very inequitable. Why should this particular group of people be given this wonderful offer whilst, say, a young couple living in the private rented sector have to struggle to get a deposit for a mortgage'.

Surprisingly, the NFHA is not apposed to the idea. Chris Baslington of the NFHA told the *New Statesman* that it was better than the right to buy and that tenants will be encouraged to move. But the money will come out of Housing Association Grant funds which are used to provide new housing for associations and which have been cut by eight per cent for 1984/5.

The proposed handouts reflect a marked departure from the practice of selling public rented policy because they require *additional* public expenditure which will never be recouped. And as the same flat or house may be the subject of a grant more than once over a period of years there is no limit on the potential cost, and unlike property sales, there will be no capital receipts which can be re-invested in new housing.

Although it is expected that the handouts will be limited to 60 per cent of the value of the home being purchased, as Chris Baslington said: 'The clause will need to be very tightly written. Otherwise, you may get a loophole which will allow people to buy a flat outright and have enough left over to put a new *Mini* in the garage.'

Christian Wolmar

London Transport under threat

TRANSPORT secretary Nicholas Ridley intends to butcher London Transport's subsidy if he succeeds in wresting control of it from the Greater London Council later this year. He makes this plain in a letter to the GLC laying down the 'protected spending' on public transport under the 1983 Transport Act. This Act enables Ridley to lay down a maximum subsidy for public transport. Above this maximum, councils like the GLC can be taken to court for spending too much. The GLC is currently subsidising London Transport to the tune of £240 million. Ridley wants it slashed to £125 million.

Ridley describes the GLC's subsidy as 'grossly excessive'. He says that his allowance of £125 million gives London Transport 'time to adjust their operations to more moderate levels of revenue support', implying that, the following year, the subsidy will be cut *below* £125 million.

Ridley criticises the 25 per cent fares cut of May 1983 because it will 'make the achievement of fares stability . . . more difficult'.

Ridley also signals his intention of blocking the GLC's proposed introduction of a joint travelcard for British Rail and LT. He says he has seen no evidence 'of the costs and scale of benefits that might accrue'. In his opinion, London's ratepayers 'are already bearing an excessive burden to meet the costs of subsidy and all proposals should be viewed in that light.'

Ironically, the travelcard for London Transport has brought in an estimated £40 million a year extra since its introduction in May 1983. It has cut the number of car-drivers in central London by 9 per cent, as well as increasing the number of bus and tube passengers by 11 per cent. This increase in the use of public transport reverses a decline that has gone on for 30 years.

Mick Hamer

Burning up thousands

THE TOBACCO Advisory Council, the industry's powerful lobby organisation, has just spent £400,000 on a newspaper advertising campaign calling on smokers to stand up and be counted. They want to prevent the Chancellor of the Exchequer further increasing the tax on a product that kills 100,000 people a year in Britain and costs the NHS £150 million for the treatment of smoking-related diseases.

As well as the *New Statesman* (see page 13) the advertisements appeared in most national daily papers, and in regional newspapers in areas where the industry is heavily concentrated. They are based on the results of two surveys commissioned by the TAC last year from National Opinion Polls (NOP). The second NOP survey, conducted last November and designed to determine whether smokers were overtaxed, asked what proportion of a packet of cigarettes went in tax. Many did not know the exact figure so interviewees were then asked if they thought that 73 per cent – the actual figure – was too high. A majority, including 43 per cent of non-smokers, then said 'yes'. This, in the trade, is regarded as a leading question designed to elicit a specific response – i.e. 'yes'.

The NOP results contrast with those obtained by a survey carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS). In this, 50 per cent of those questioned felt the government should do more to discourage smoking. But a TAC spokesman claimed this result was 'dubious', owing more to 'interviewee fatigue' than genuine conviction.

Fearful that a price increase above the rate of inflation will cause falling sales, the tobacco companies are trying to convince the government that they should not risk jobs in the industry. TAC officials met the Chancellor on 24 January to press their case.

This is the second year that TAC has run such a campaign, a response to the growing success of the anti-smoking campaigns. Their first campaign, based on a series of questions about the value of the tobacco industry, drew a counter blast from the HEC with a series of questions about the damage caused by the industry. Last July, the OPCS published the findings that, for the first time, in every social class and both sexes, smokers were in the minority. The HEC published this fact in full-page newspaper advertisements.

So far this year ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) has circulated the results of a survey on local authority policies on smoking, showing that 84 per cent of councils enforce some sort of restriction, and is one of eleven health organisations to sponsor 29 February as 'National No-smoking Day'. However, the TAC has still spent, in a fortnight, two fifths of the HEC's entire annual anti-smoking budget.

Phil Cohen

Alan Pease

The Policemen's Ball

Lessons in the creation of political activists: on 24 April last year, 7,000 animal rights activists, many with no political experience or strong other political convictions, marched from Clapham, South London, to Carshalton, site of the laboratories of the British Industrial Biological Research Association. The British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection claims animals are used there in cosmetics and chemical tests. Police erected barriers, but about 20 demonstrators broke through towards the labs. The Metropolitan Police have recently announced that they are launching an investigation into complaints about the way the demonstration was handled. It will be headed by Chief Inspector John Grosse of V Division, Kingston-on-Thames, who will also look into the claim that a 'black oily substance' had been applied to the truncheons.

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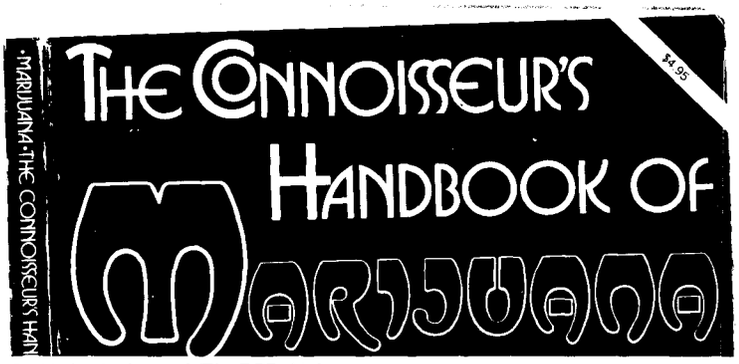
DPP claim drugs books are dirty



Is this book obscene? The DPP thinks so

AN ATTEMPT by Manchester police to extend the scope of the Obscene Publications Act to include 'drug related' books ended inconclusively at Manchester Crown Court last week. This was the latest round in what appears to be a campaign conducted through the Director of Public Prosecutions to prevent both the publication and distribution of material that has anything favourable to say about drugs.

Nineteen months ago, police with warrants under the Obscene Publications Act started seizing drug-related books. Four raids–by three different police forces on two London-based wholesalers, on a Bristol 'headshop' and on Grass Roots Books in Manchester – took place within 48 hours. Further police action, mainly on alternative and radical bookshops, broadened the scope of their warrants: works by Aldous Huxley, William Burroughs and Baudelaire, among others, disappeared into the police haul of drug cultivation handbooks.

Last week the first trial to arise out of the raids ended inconclusively in Crown Court when the prosecution offered no evidence on Section 2 charges against former Grass Roots Books worker Michael Don. The prosecution was brought by Manchester police and, during the ten-minute hearing, their counsel admitted that originally they had only wanted to serve Grass Roots Books with a 'section 3' summons. This is an order for the destruction of the material and is heard before magistrates. Later, said the counsel, they 'received instructions' to prosecute under Section 2, a more serious charge which carries the right to jury trial but also the possibility of prison sentences. The 'instructions' would appear to have issued from the DPP, to whom the case was referred.

The question remains as to why it took nineteen months for the case to be heard. Police held the stock seized from Grass Roots books for nine months before even issuing a summons. The test case will now be against Knockabout Comix, who will appear at the Old Bailey on 8 May on 15 charges under Section 2 of the Obscene Publications Act and two under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Depending on the outcome, Airlift distributors may also be prosecuted.

In these cases it is the DPP which is prosecuting. When asked however if it is DPP policy to extend the meaning of Obscene Publications, the DPP told the *New Statesman* that it was not DPP policy to comment on DPP policy, that they could not comment on general issues only on specific cases, and that they could not comment on the specific cases as they were sub judice.

Richard Armitage

Right to Read 1984 are raising money for the defence. Send to the campaign at 249 Kensal Road, London, W10.

MISCELLANY

No other word for it

Private waste disposal contractor Cleanaway, part of the CKN group, thinks that 'privatisation' is an ugly word. The latest issue of 'Cleanaway Focus', the company magazine, offered £50 to anyone who could 'sellafield' it, and think of a new word to take its place. When we contacted Ruth Roll, Cleanaway's marketing services manager, to find out what the new word was, and who had won the £50, she admitted: 'Unfortunately we had very little response, and the two entries we did get were rather the result of

misspellings than anything else. I hate "privatisation", and am sure it is something invented by an American journalist.' Perhaps it's not the *word* that's the problem.

Three-minute wonder

Rhodes Boyson was moved from the Education Department by Margaret Thatcher because, despite being a former headteacher, he knew next to nothing about education. He is now minister for social security and was interviewed for Channel Four's *20-20 Vision* programme on the scandal of bed and breakfast accommodation for social security claimants. You can find out what he *does* know about the subject on Saturday at 8pm. What you will *not* see is the following outburst, faithfully recorded on a transcript obtained by the *NS*: 'We're going to be about 12 minutes on this. I mean, why are you going on about this, when you are only going to take three minutes out from it? This could go on to one o'clock. I mean, if you said to me, give me a three-minute statement, wouldn't that be much more sensible than answering questions where they don't fit together? It seems to me a damn silly way of doing it for a three-minute interview. I shall certainly write to your chairman about it . . .' No doubt Channel Four's chairman, Edmund Dell, will be very interested to read Boyson's letter.

Here today . . .

When a small Oxford publishing company produced a book on Yuri Andropov last November, it very astutely insured itself against the death of its subject, on the grounds that this would hit the sales of a book with a title like *Andropov in Power* (by Jonathan Steele and Eric Abraham, published by Martin Robertson, £9.95). This week the publisher collected a sum reputed to be £25,000, although this was described as 'an exaggeration' by a spokesperson. If the premium was £500, as the rumour goes, this might make up for the prediction made in the book that Andropov will become 'the most formidable Kremlin leader for 30 years'. It's a pity the *Observer* didn't insure itself against the embarrassment of carrying its colour supplement 'Room of My Own' feature last Sunday on art-faker Tom Keating the day he died. The feature is now dubbed 'A Tomb of My Own'.

Law unto themselves

How the legal profession's 'self-regulation' works, part CXLVII. The law Society's ruling body, its 72-member Council, meets in secret this Thursday to consider a report it commissioned on its handling of complaints against solicitor Glanville Davies. Davies was a Council member for 15 years, and was found to have overcharged a client by £131,000, or 195 per cent. He was removed from the Law Society's roll for 'gross misconduct' in October 1983 – nine years after the start of the affair – but only by a court petition after the Council failed to take action. Last month the Law Society's 'lay observer' published a report critical of the Council. This week's report is much stronger and names those responsible. It is understood to include a recommendation that its findings be published, although the Council is unlikely to seize on this idea with much enthusiasm. As an alternative, interested outsiders can study the list of members who felt unable to attend the meeting. (All members received their copies of the report well in advance.) Council members are shifting nervously in their seats because Granada TV's *World In Action* is screening its investigation into the affair next month. One possible response will be to shift the blame on to ex-Council members who have since died. Stay tuned for part CXLVIII.

Still running

Fleet Street was entirely wrong about the Omani contract story. Most seasoned hacks thought that it wouldn't run when the *Observer* first broke it. Even *Obs* editor 'Tiny' Trelford is reported as having had doubts about it. What persuaded him that there was a real story, it's said, was the extraordinary performance and violent reaction of Mrs T's press supremo, Bernard Ingham, when he called on No. 10 to put the paper's allegations formally to the Prime Minister. The Foreign Office and the Department of Trade are clearly scandalised by the Thatcher deal. The leaks appear originally to have come out of the FO, but the Department of Trade was quick to 'let it be known' that *it* had certainly not briefed the PM on any possible university contract before she went on that trip. The FO is now putting about the story of the senior diplomat who was called in to brief Mrs T on the Hong Kong situation and found young Sanjay sitting in the room. He assumed that he should wait while family business was disposed of, but was surprised to be told to carry on, because 'it's just Mark'.

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Ungentlemanly spy at the Travellers

A SECRET undercover recruiting operation for the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) is being run by a man who is careless enough not to pay his bills on time.

Colonel Francis Hyde 'Jim' Scobie, a veteran of 21 years in the army, now runs one of Britain's most unusual recruiting agencies. He is a front man for the 'Friends' – the gentlemanly codename for SIS employees. His recruiting agency, F. H. Scobie and Associates, operated until recently from the top two floors of a plush office block at 28/29 St James's Square, London SW1. It even has a licence from the Department of Employment to operate an employment agency, although this expires at the end of this month.

Scobie's former landlords at St James's, Scan Am Ltd, say that the colonel left without paying the rent, or for the furniture he took with him. Nor did he leave a forwarding address. However, after the *New Statesman* had provided Scan Am's solicitors with Colonel Scobie's home address, Scan Am confirmed earlier this week that the colonel had now paid up.

Colonel Scobie has now moved his office to 23 Warwick Square, also in the St James's district. There he remains conveniently close to SIS's own centre for recruiting secret agents. This is in a huge white Georgian mansion, No. 3 Carlton Gardens, directly opposite the Foreign Secretary's official residence.

The *New Statesman* has obtained copies of letters written by SIS to prospective recruits found for them by Colonel Scobie. 'It has been suggested to me,' one letter says, 'that you might be interested to have a discussion with us about appointments in government service in the field of foreign affairs which occasionally arise in addition to those covered by the Diplomatic Service Grade 7 and 8 competition.' This is a heavily veiled reference to the Secret Service. The letters bear an official crest and the heading 'Co-ordination Staff – Foreign and Commonwealth Office.' In fact, there is no such department inside the Foreign Office. The letter is signed, illegibly, by a 'Recruitment Officer.'

Colonel Scobie's candidates are then given a preliminary interview in gentlemanly style – a series of expansive lunches at the Travellers' Club in St James, a well-known SIS watering hole. SIS's interviewer on such occasions, Mr Mike Reynolds, is well known to generations of Oxbridge graduates who have been fingered by certain of their dons as likely SIS operatives.

The Travellers' Club, however, don't think that Colonel Scobie is entirely a gentleman. When the *New Statesman* rang to ask after him last year, the Membership Secretary told us that they too had been looking for him. It was just a small matter – several lunches for SIS recruits, after which he had walked out of the club without paying his bill.

Colonel Scobie was not available at his home earlier this week to comment on these allegations. His telephone number continuously gives an 'unobtainable' tone and is, according to British Telecom, 'barred' to prevent unwelcome incoming telephone calls.

Duncan Campbell

New SWP breakaway formed

ANOTHER new socialist grouping has arisen out of the re-organisation of the British Left. In Bradford, a

Andrew Wiard/Report

Rebellion against SWP leadership of Tony Cliff (above)

Socialist Federation has been set up following a conference of 60 ex-members of the once-dynamic Socialist Workers' Party. The Federation is to be a loose umbrella organisation of independent campaigning groups.

The conference was held last weekend, with ex-members arriving from London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newcastle and the Midlands as well as Bradford. Amongst those attending was Bill Kay, a founder member, and Terry Farrar, who had been a SWP activist at Metal Box.

Farrar was one of six members of Bradford SWP who were expelled last July. A further nine branch members then resigned. Efforts to find out their original crime have failed. According to the SWP the six constituted a 'subconscious faction'. Immediately before the explusion the branch had been told by Yorkshire full-time organiser Andrew Strouthous to stop all race work. According to members present, he said 'racism was irrelvant and peripheral to the working-class struggle . . .'

Following their expulsion, the Bradford dissidents circulated a document to other SWP branches in which they quote the accusation that they were a 'subconscious faction', and the charge from 'Control Commission' member Sheila McGregor that they were 'secret members of the RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party, a breakaway from the SWP).' National secretary Peter Clark says the issue will be discussed at SWP's conference but otherwise 'I'll talk to you about fighting the Tories, not about internal politics.'

The protests of the dissidents were a stimulus to other critics of SWP's direction. At last week's conference they argued that the once revolutionary organisation had 'degenerated into a paranoid disciplining bureaucracy'. Following its analysis that the working class had entered a period of downturn in the class struggle, SWP had, in the last three years, successively closed down Women's Voice and its women's work, formally withdrawn from the Anti-Nazi League and anti-racist work, and disbanded Rank and File, its medium for agitation in the trade unions.

Motions were passed supporting rank and file activities, and a policy of re-unification and armed struggle for Ireland. From the women's caucus there were proposals pledging involvement in activities around unemployment and community politics. According to the economic motion, in the next ten years labour costs would be 'restructured', effective trade unions destroyed, support for 'scapegoatism racism' would grow and the Nazi right would revive. Defensive struggles by workers and 'oppressed sectors' would follow.

Despite its similarity to the SWP's approach in the 1970s, the conference shared a view that the Left's strategy had failed.

Dave Harrison

Doctors' share keeps on rising

A NEW PRIVATE HOSPITAL in which seven NHS consultants have invested is being built in West Yorkshire, despite increasing criticism of the rules on doctors' conflicts of interest. Shares in the hospital, at Methley Park, near Wakefield, were offered to investors in October 1983, to raise £1.4 million. The seven – Drs R. Nicholson, A. Broughton, G. Brown, N. Grewal, P. Howe, A. Rainey and S. Sharma – had already subscribed for 46,000 £1 shares.

Oliver Rowell, general manager of the charitable Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust, has written to the General Medical Council urging it to tighten up its code banning doctors or their spouses from owning shares in private hospitals for which they work. The spirit of the code is widely flouted, because a doctor who works *in* a private hospital never works *for* it, but is self-employed under a contract with the company.

In fact, all the big private hospital companies claim that it is not their policy to encourage doctors to buy shares in their hospitals.

For example the Hospital Corporation of America recently bought the Seltahart group of six private hospitals. In three of the hospitals, 'consultant investors' have been bought out, and negotiations are in hand at a fourth. HCA Managing Director Art Ouellette says: 'As a matter of fact we discourage consultant investors. In the long term we find there may be an ethical conflict where doctors have got money in a project.' HCA's latest development, the Chalybeate hospital, across the road from Southampton's General Hospital, is financed entirely by the company.

Although BUPA say they, too, oppose doctor-investors, they are frequently involved in joint projects – like Methley Park – in which doctors have investments. Methley Park is, in fact, being planned on the same formula as the Fitzwilliam hospital in Peterborough (see *NS* 1 April 1983). It is being backed by BUPA, built by Conder Midlands, managed by Community Hospitals and financed by City investors through investment bankers Granville – after 'trigger' investments by local consultants have demonstrated their commitment to the project.

According to Community Hospitals, it was the local NHS doctors who were 'primarily responsible' for the initiation of the project. Directors of the company set up by Community Hospitals to manage the project also include a director of BUPA Hospitals Ltd, Eric Hemming, and local businessman Michael Robinson, chairman of the Yorkshire Weekly Newspaper group.

A spokesman for Community Hospitals, a company which acts as a conduit for City investment – both from institutions and higher-rate taxpayers who can invest on very favourable terms under the government's Business Expansion Scheme – said he was aware of criticisms of doctor-shareholders. 'In future we wouldn't require it necessarily. Our policy is shifting with the times,' he said.

Labour health spokesman Frank Dobson is writing to Norman Fowler pointing out a number of defects in the present rules. The statutory regulations issued last year specify that any member of a health authority having a 'direct or indirect pecuniary interest in any contract or other matter' should declare it and not take part in the discussion or vote. Dobson wants to know what 'other matter' means and what constitutes an 'indirect pecuniary interest'.

John Rentoul

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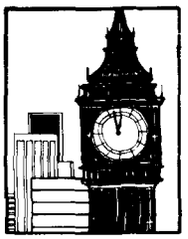

PETER ELLNER Political Editor

How to change the voting system and remain a socialist

EVEN AN AVID poll-watcher like myself sympathises with Tony Benn's view that media coverage of the Chesterfield by-election should concern issues – jobs, disarmament and the health service – and not be dominated by opinion estimates of who is gaining ground and who is losing. Yet in a three-horse race it is hard to deny electors the right to vote tactically – and wrong to deny them the polling information on which to make an effective tactical choice.

When tactical voting takes place a sort of ad hoc electoral reform occurs, with some voters intuitively applying the principle of the alternative vote to their decision.

Labour's knee-jerk reaction to the issue of electoral reform is to have none of it. Insofar as electoral reform means proportional representation, the party's attitude is wholly right. Apart from the self-serving argument that no majority Labour government is ever likely to be elected under PR, there is – as I argued last week – no theoretical reason why PR should fulfil the claim that its enthusiasts make for it: it does *not* necessarily generate governments possessing majority public support.

There are, however, reforms other than PR that are worth considering. For the Labour Party, the alternative vote could have a number of attractions. Under AV, voters do not place a cross on the ballot paper; instead they mark their first choice '1', their second choice '2' and so on. If no candidate secures a majority of votes when first preferences are counted, the least successful candidates are eliminated in order, and their supporters' next available preferences are added to the totals of the surviving candidates, until one has a majority and is declared the winner.

One reason why Labour should take AV seriously is that it is very similar to the way most internal party elections take place. The exhaustive ballots used to choose Labour's leader and deputy leader, and the party's parliamentary candidates involve votes conducted in sequence, but the principle is the same: to find a winner who commands majority support. Tony Benn has more experience than most of this system – both in his contest in 1981 against Denis Healey for Labour's deputy leadership and in his battle last month for the nomination at Chesterfield.

To the best of my knowledge, nobody has suggested abandoning the exhaustive ballot inside the Labour Party in favour of first-past-the-post elections. Whatever shape the electoral college should have in choosing the leader, and whatever procedures local General Committees should adopt to select or reselect their candidates, we all seem to favour majority rule.

So why not for Westminster? Last June, most MPs – 335 out of 650 – were elected with the support of fewer than 50 per cent of those voting. In Mid Ulster the Democratic Unionists' Rev. Thomas McCrea received 30 per cent of the vote and won; in Chelmsford the Liberals' Stuart Mole received 47 per cent and lost. Discrepancies like these are surely every bit as disturbing as the acute bias in the present system against third parties with evenly distributed support.

Indeed, one of the most cogent arguments against PR can be turned in favour of AV. The Liberal/SDP's favoured system of PR, the single transferable vote, would require constituencies of up to half a million electors, and so alter dramatically the relationship between MPs and the places they represent. Yet if we want to retain single-member constituencies for a country the size of Britain, there is a strong case for reinforcing the legitimacy of such a system by ensuring that all MPs have the support of the majority of their voters.

OF COURSE, in the grubby world of real politics, the practical effects of any electoral system are at least as important as its theoretical qualities. With this necessarily pragmatic point in mind, I asked Clive Payne of Nuffield College, Oxford, to interrogate his computer as to how AV might have affected the result of last June's general election. We must necessarily assume that under an AV election everyone would have cast their first preference for the party they actually voted for on the day. In reality, some voters would have behaved differently. Even so, Payne's analysis clearly demonstrates the properties of AV.

The two key points to emerge are, first, that the Conservatives would still have won an outright majority of seats in Parliament, despite being the first choice of just 42 per cent of UK voters; and, second, that the Liberal/SDP Alliance would have more than double their present number of MPs – although still substantially less than they would have obtained under STV.

The simplest assumption to make is that, wherever Labour or Conservative candidates came third, the second preferences of all their supporters would transfer to the Alliance and that wherever Alliance candidates came third, their supporters' second choices divided equally between Labour and Conservative. (For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that the second preferences of other parties' candidates made no net difference to the final outcome.) On these assumptions, this is how last year's general election would have worked out:

	Seats won	AV 'result'	Difference
Conservative	397	349	−48
Labour	209	194	−15
Liberal	17	44	+27
SDP	6	44	+38

Two particular points are worth making. The first is that the Conservatives would have 'lost' more seats than Labour – but would still end up more 'over-represented', in terms of their proportional support, than any other party. The second point is that the discrepancy *within* the Alliance between Liberal and SDP representation would have disappeared.

A more realistic assumption is that the Alliance would not pick up all the second choices of Labour or Tory supporters. Moreover, it is possible that the supporters of eliminated Alliance candidates would not have divided their second choices equally between Labour and Conservative. The following three computer simulations all assume an effective transfer of 80 per cent of third-place Labour or Tory candidates to the Alliance; in addition:

- simulation A assumes that the second choices of Alliance supporters divide 60-40 in the Tories' favour;
- simulation B assumes a 50-50 division;
- simulation C assumes a 60-40 division in Labour's favour.

	A	B	C
Conservative	389	368	344
Labour	179	200	224
Liberal	33	33	33
SDP	30	30	30

This time the Alliance's 25 per cent of popular support would have harvested it 10 per cent of the seats (again, equally divided between Liberals and SDP); for Labour and the Tories, though, the chief interest in these figures is the 45-seat difference between A and C. In a closer fought contest than last June's election such rewards could prove decisive.

The advantages of AV, then, are threefold. It would reinforce the legitimacy of a single-member constituency system; it would still enable majority governments to be formed (although not quite as easily as now when there is a widely-supported third party); and it would be less biased against the Liberals and the SDP (although they would still get less than they think they deserve).

In 1931, under pressure from the Liberals, a minority Labour government tried to introduce AV. It would be by no means ignoble if, in similar circumstances, a future Labour government tried again. □

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Bike bag secrets

Duncan Campbell gives a personal account of events and police actions against him following a bicycle accident last Thursday

FEW POLICE RAIDS can have been conducted as punctiliously and politely as that nearly seven-hour-long trawl through my home in Stoke Newington, north London, last Saturday. I was present throughout – ill and injured, just having been released from hospital. Special Branch men (and a woman) scrupulously put every book, paper and file back in place, asked repeatedly and concernedly after my wellbeing, helped me up and down stairs, brought glasses of water, and tidied away the mess occasioned by their visit.

With my face bleeding from a cycle accident just 36 hours before, I could reflect that the British political police force are clearly a much pleasanter and more orderly bunch than could be expected in South America, South Africa or places of that sort. Throughout the long afternoon it was possible for long periods to forget that the whole unforgivable event had arisen from their plundering what was left at the scene of a traffic accident. As the search proceeded, their own eyes and tired manner showed a growing uncertainty of purpose.

The Special Branch team left bearing only the most trivial 'finds'. The first was a 'restricted' Army Manual on 'Personal Protection', which has already gained a certain notoriety for the section it contains instructing squaddies in the complicated arts of urinating and defecating in the Arctic – in 56 separate steps. It was described at length in the *NS*'s Miscellany column on 6 January. We received no official complaint then that the article had contravened secrecy rules. The copy that the Special Branch made off with this weekend had, in fact, just been posted to me by the BBC's *Jasper Carrott* show. (Carrott's comedy-writing team had been planning since October to use the manual for a joke sequence in the popular off-beat show.)

The largest of the Branch's 'finds' was two folders of photographic contact prints. 'These,' pronounced Superintendent Thomson (who headed the search), 'appear to be concerned with prohibited places'. They were seized. The Post Office Tower in London, and other similar towers, are among many sites shown in the prints. The Special Branch last had these pictures in their possession during 1977 and 1978, when they were actually produced in evidence as part of an unsuccessful charge against me, during what became known as the ABC trial, of illegally 'collecting information'. The charge was dropped by the prosecution; and the use of such charges was later described by the judge as 'unjustified and oppressive'.

The second set of contact prints, as the Special Branch will doubtless soon discover, are *their own* copies of the first set – which they made for the ABC trial. There are a few other, newer prints – most of which, such as aerial pictures of the Greenham Common silos, have been published in the *New Statesman* – without any official objection.

It was not a successful search for the Branch, and it was not worth the more than ten person-days of costly police overtime pay involved: one Army Manual, one scrap of paper from my bin, two folders of photographic contact prints, and parts of two folders of research notes on nuclear weapons – with no government secrets or moles' revelations within.

Each of the files' contents was duly noted by an exhibits officer: notes from the 'Military Balance' annual of the Institute for Strategic Studies; letters and notes from distinguished Professors and academics at Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Lancaster, Sussex and Southampton Universities about the British nuclear programme; notes from books; a letter from the Telford Anti-Nuclear Group and so on. Nary a mole in sight – except for one CND campaigner signing him-, or herself, as 'Manfred Mole'.

Exhibit RN/20, for example, was identified as a 'Sheet of white New Statesman paper – PRIOR thereon'. I can reveal to the Special Branch a time and money-saving secret. Mr Prior is a civil servant. He does (or did) work for the Ministry of Defence. He was (and probably still is) one of their Press Officers.

Another note in the same file purported to impart secret information about a nuclear test site from an official source. It clearly attracted the Branch's attention. The letter was about 'Mururoa Atoll'. It is in the Pacific and is used only for *French* nuclear tests.

THIS UNSUCCESSFUL fishing expedition arose from my accident, late last Thursday night. I have amnesia, and the police have as yet given me no account of what happened. But it appears to have been caused solely by a mechanical failure on my bike. I flew over the handlebars and was knocked unconscious for more than five minutes.

On the back of my bike were two bags or 'panniers' – one of them empty. In the other were *New Statesman* files and correspondence, several copies of last week's *NS*, and my address book, diary, wallet and trousers. These were all helpfully taken by the police.

My papers, about which the police asked me nothing, included have still smattering of loose papers. files and a files concerned last week's *NS* story on 'Legion' private army, next week's ed *New Statesman* supplement on civil rties (!), and my current 'projects' file. This sted my proposed future work, and will ubtless now enable the security services ver up over more than a dozen stories which I had proposed to work during the coming months. Some of the stories concern the Special Branch itself and those who work with it. The stories ranged from the of National Front members as Special Branch agents in Manchester, to a murder admitted by an SAS officer.

Doubtless there were some interesting-looking papers in the files – such as one on GCHQ radio tracking techniques used in evidence in a closed session of a recent trial. The papers were confidential. But the police tell the magistrate – or even know – that I had been employed by a defence solicitors as an expert witness in the case and had the papers in that capacity.

There were two notes, marked 'restricted', referring to civil defence planning, which I had, quite officially, from the GLC, where I am a co-opted committee member. Did the police bother to tell the magistrate that? There was a long list of telephone STD codes for army and government exchanges, suitably lengthy, incomprehensible and thus indubitably sinister. I doubt if the police even knew what the list was; still less would

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The Observer

Duncan Campbell at the front door of his home in Stoke Newington, north London, during last Saturday's police raid.

they have known that the codes can be used from London; or even, with a bit of difficulty, from Eastern Europe.

After getting the warrant, SB officers went down to pull me out of St Bartholomew's Hospital – but I had already been let out. After waiting until a solicitor arrived, they began the search – in my living room, and with meticulous care. They searched inside cushions, lifted every apple out of the apple bowl, and checked the signature on every Christmas card. They checked between the page of every one of hundreds of books, newspapers and magazines. Nothing, not even the potted plants, was left undisturbed.

Four long hours and three rooms later, the Special Branch had a different attitude. They had found one unexciting Army manual, and nothing more. Searching the third drawer of the first of five filing cabinets, Woman Detective Constable Norwell now came to a bulging yellow file marked 'Secrets – Leaks'. Inside the file, on top of the file, was a secret Cabinet paper, one grade more highly classified and eight years more up to date than the silly Army manual. It was marked 'Property of Her Britannic Majesty's Government'. The Superintendent was eagerly summoned up the stairs.

He turned it over and told Ms Norwell to put it back. 'It is a secret cabinet thing', he said, 'but it's only about pay negotiations. Leave it'. The Superintendent may not have known that the 'Confidential' Cabinet paper he held had been leaked *in toto* to *The Times* in 1978 and published.

By the time they got onto the later rooms, the searchers were so tired that any excuse *not* to search an area seemed to suffice. Whole piles of magazines were left untouched, and many files on defence topics given only a cursory flick.

As the hours went by Superintendent Thomson rather touchingly confided to us that he and his wife were due to attend their school PTA dinner that night and it would be the second time he had failed to show up for one. We had a vision of the poor man getting hell from his wife that night.

The entire Stoke Newington haul was one flimsy and laughable army manual. The former Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Robert Mark, in his autobiography *In the Office of Constable* wrote:

> I would like to see the repeal of Section 2, but in the event of that not being forthcoming, I would hope for its increasing disregard by civil servants in particular and anyone feeling that secrecy on any issue was harmful to the public interest. Convictions under Section 2 would nowadays be difficult to obtain except in cases clearly motivated by self interest.

'Unauthorised revelation of maladministration', he has pointed out '. . . would almost certainly not involve any real risk these days' for three reasons:

> *First*, . . . the Attorney General would not risk a prosecution; *Second*, . . . a jury would be unlikely to convict; *Third*, . . . in the unlikely event of a conviction, the judiciary, if satisfied of the disinterested motives of the accused, would be unlikely to impose any penalty.

Sir Kenneth will no doubt be reflecting that every official secrets case in the last 20 years involving journalists and/or the public interest has indeed ended just as Sir Robert Mark describes. □

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NUCLEAR WASTE

What to do with it all?

Martin Ince on the latest evidence of disposal problems

THE KIND of nuclear programme of which the proposed Sizewell B power station is the start would produce thousands of cubic metres of highly toxic waste requiring burial hundreds of metres below ground. It would also create large quantities of heat-producing radioactive waste for which there is as yet no development programme for disposal. Those are the findings that consultant scientist Dr Gordon Thompson is to present to the Sizewell inquiry on behalf of the Town and Country Planning Association.

The plans to expand the production of nuclear waste without any sure policy for dealing with it run directly contrary to the statements made in Parliament. Examining these issues in 1981, the House of Commons Select Committee on Energy argued that it would be 'unthinkable for any government ot commit this country to a substantial programme of nuclear power until there is a firm prospect that the problems of the transport and long-term disposal of nuclear waste can be managed safely.'

Dr Thompson has looked at the radioactive waste production consequences of three different courses of action: building no new nuclear power stations but running the existing ones for their remaining lifetimes; building pressurised-water reactors (PWRs) until the year 2000 and then stopping, and finally continuing to build them into the twenty-first century.

Thompson found that the British nuclear programmes had produced 1,802 tonnes of spent fuel by 1980. If no more nuclear stations are built, the spent fuel from existing ones will amount to 5,532 tonnes in 2015, after which no more will then be produced. But on the 'plateau' scenario – new PWRs being built for the rest of this century – waste will increase to 18,000 tonnes in 2030.

A high nuclear programme into the twenty-first century means over 52,000 tonnes of spent fuel by 2030, with more to follow. The time scales involved are very long. Some of BNFL's cost estimates presented to the Sizewell inquiry refer not to the twentieth or twenty-first century, but to the twenty-second.

This spent fuel is only part of the problem. There are also less active wastes, plus a volume of highly active waste generated when the station itself is decommissioned. But it is the spent fuel which is the serious management problem because BNFL is not going to have the plant available to process British PWR-type fuel into high, medium and low-level waste for many years. And construction of the Thorp plant, which is designed to carry this out, has not even been started yet.

However, it is not essential to reprocess the fuel, and Gordon Thompson points out that the CEGB plans to store up to seven reactor loads – or more than 700 tonnes – of spent fuel at the Sizewell site. This fuel is to be stored under water, in a pool whose water supply must be replenished. In normal operation this can be safe enough, but if the coolant is lost, the temperature rises and volatile radioactive material, including dangerous substances such as Caesium 137, can escape. Even quite a minor accident at the power station would render the pool area inaccessible, so that the water would start to run out. This would make small reactor accidents far more dangerous.

Thompson thinks that this problem is amenable to a fairly simple technical solution. This is to store the spent fuel in gas rather than water, in an area which can be safely left without power, water or human intervention. This is the method US utilities are now adopting, since the US has no nuclear fuel reprocessing and is unlikely to have any.

Provided these stores are properly engineered, they could be used to store fuel indefinitely. Given that there is no real need to reuse the fuel, this could be a cheaper and safer option than having it reprocessed by BNFL. Reprocessing is most worthwhile if uranium prices are high – not likely for the moment with 50 US uranium mines in mothballs; or if the plutonium produced in the reactor is needed for fuelling a fast reactor – not likely until well into the next century if ever; or for making nuclear weapons.

AT THE MOMENT, however, the plan is still to reprocess Sizewell's spent fuel. This means that high-level nuclear wastes containing the radioactive leftovers from the reactor would be produced. These products are now held in tanks at Sellafield. Thompson views this part of the nuclear-fuel cycle as one of the most dangerous. The plan is to turn these hot wastes into glass, using a process developed in France, but they will then have to be stored. Although the glass can be kept above ground, the long-term intention is to bury it. The problem is that the programme of deep drilling which was being carried out by the Institute of Geological Sciences to test potential deposit sites has now been abandoned after intense public resistance in Scotland and elsewhere.

This means that, in common with several issues affecting the operation of the reactor itself, the inquiry is being asked to approve the construction of Sizewell B before finding out how safe it will be, or whether fundamental safety problems are soluble.

The same is true of the less dangerous nuclear wastes which are also produced by the nuclear-power programme, and other users of radioactive materials. To handle these low and intermediate-level nuclear wastes the industry has set up Nirex, the Nuclear Industry Radio-active Waste Executive, based at Harwell. The only active operation Nirex has at present is the annual Atlantic dump of radioactive material. But this has now collapsed as a result of opposition from the National Union of Seafarers and others. Nirex's next plans are low and intermediate-level waste dumps in Bedfordshire and on Teesside. These proposals will be fiercely resisted and again may not come to anything, in which case Nirex will have to look at less and less suitable sites for its dump. The existing low-level dump at Drigg, near Sellafield, is run by BNFL. But unless a replacement is found it will fill up in just over a decade.

Thompson's figures show that the UK's present nuclear stations will produce 715,000 cubic metres of low and intermediate level waste by 2030, if reprocessing continues. With nuclear building until 2000, the volume goes up to over a million cubic metres, while a high nuclear scenario leaves almost 2 million cubic metres by 2030. This means that a government wanting a high nuclear programme is more or less obliged to find deep and surface repositories for the waste produced, whatever public opinion makes of the idea.

But Elstow near Bedford has reacted far worse to the idea of becoming a surface waste repository than it did to the prospect of a local nuclear power station, and the reaction at Billingham on Teesside, where an old mine is earmarked for deep waste disposal, is also severe. □

Martin Ince is currently writing a book on the Sizewell Inquiry for Pluto Press to be published this autumn and was a witness at the Inquiry for the Town and Country Planning Association.

Sizewell A power station in Suffolk: the CEGB wants to build another but has no idea what to do with the radioactive waste it will produce

Chris Davies/Network

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UNIONS

Battle for the giant

Francis Beckett looks at two of the front runners in the battle to lead Britain's biggest union

CONTRARY to reports, the left and right of the Transport and General Workers Union are not engaged in a titanic struggle for the leadership of Britain's biggest union. National Organiser Ron Todd and Welsh Regional Secretary George Wright furiously deny they are, respectively, left and right-wing candidates, and also condemn those who they think spread the story. Todd condemns the media, Wright the hard left.

All the same, when branch nominations close on 24 February these two will emerge as the front runners. When members have cast their votes at branch meetings, it will be very surprising indeed if one or the other is not declared General Secretary elect.

'I can't see any real political difference between us,' says George Wright, who likes to point out that he too is a member of CND, and he, not Todd, was Neil Kinnock's old Welsh comrade-in-arms. 'Neil and I are very close. They call us the terrible twins down here, you know.'

Yet Todd's left credentials seem to come in more generally acceptable currency than Wright's, probably because someone has applied a well-known litmus test for left-wing purity. 'I wouldn't back Tony Benn for deputy leader of the Labour Party because I knew the membership in Wales wouldn't back him,' says Wright.

If Wright won't wear the right-wing label, Todd won't wear the left-wing one either. 'I want to be General Secretary of the whole union, not one faction of it. I don't see this as left versus right,' he says. He refused to give policy guarantees to the Broad Left in return for their support and they considered supporting Irish Regional Secretary John Freeman, but he did not have sufficient national reputation. They also considered Deputy General Secretary Alex Kitson as a caretaker to keep the seat warm for Freeman. But Kitson, at 62, is older than Moss Evans, who pointedly remarked that he was standing down for a younger man.

By 10 January the *Morning Star*'s industrial writer Mick Costello was telling readers that Todd was 'known for his consistent support for left policies'. On 15 January the Broad Left decided to go with Todd, 'warts and all', as one of them put it.

That doesn't, says Todd, make him the left candidate. It just makes him the candidate the Broad Left is backing. If the distinction seems a little thin, it is still very real to some members of the Broad Left, for whom it sums up doubts about their candidate. Freeman and, after much arm-twisting, Kitson have abandoned the centre of the ring for Ron Todd's corner, but they share the left's concerns. Kitson may be hoping to improve things by seeing Freeman installed in his own job. He is entitled to carry on until he is 65. But he may retire within the two-year lifetime of the executive now being elected if it seems, when the results are known, to be an executive likely to appoint Freeman in his place.

Other hats still in the ring include three of the trade group national secretaries – Tod Sullivan (white collar workers), George Henderson (construction) and Mick Martin (public service). And National Women's Officer Marie Patterson is also putting in a bid to become the first woman General Secretary of any major union.

WHOEVER gets the job faces an unenviable task. Since 1979 membership has fallen from 2 million to 1½ million. And that figure would look at least 100,000 worse without takeovers of smaller unions.

The TGWU General Secretary is probably less of a power in the land than he has ever been since Bevin launched the series of amalgamations which formed the union in the 1920s. Government ministers whose favourite diversion is humiliating trade unionists are, paradoxically, often best dealt with by unions unused to the corridors of power. But TGWU members once watched with pride while Jack Jones gave fatherly advice to prime ministers.

The TGWU has also lost a huge proportion of its status and power in the TUC. The congress suddenly discovered in 1977 that it could do things its biggest affiliate didn't like. It discovered this dramatically by expelling the TGWU, if only for half an hour, at the behest of one of the smallest affiliates, the Licensed House Managers. Over the next few years a series of badly received indignities followed. Their most serious defeat was over 'automaticity', which removed the power of those with the biggest block votes to determine who sits on the General Council.

And within the union, the General Secretary's authority has declined. Moss Evans, partly from inclination, partly through illness, never gave the firm lead the union was used to. The executive became stronger and so did regional secretaries – always a potential power base for powerful independent baronies because the TGWU is heavily regionalised, and each of the 11 regional secretaries has at their disposal an organisation and bureaucracy which is generally far superior to that controlled by the General Secretary in London. ▷

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George Wright is critical of Moss Evans. 'The TGWU needs good, strong, effective, positive leadership' he says. 'Our impact has been blunted by our recent experiment with collective leadership.' He wants to see greater professionalism, adding by way of explanation that he is 'a young man in an old man's world.' Todd, on the other hand, refuses to criticise Evans, or to be equally precise. 'There must be a collective assessment of our union,' he says.

By TGWU standards Wright is both young and impatient. He knows that to survive under Thatcher, the union has to learn new techniques and new subtlety, and he is determined to see it happen. Several powerful regional secretaries like Joe Mills (north), John Ashman (south), Brian Mathers (Midlands) and Mike Davey (Yorkshire) already support him.

But the recent TGWU tradition, after it broke with Bevin and Deakin's style – the tradition of Cousins and Jack Jones – is inherited by Ron Todd. A sophisticated politician, he comes from a traditionally strong part of the union and understands its conservatism and what makes it tick. He might be better able to control it because he doesn't seem to want to. His reputation combines forcefulness with integrity, radicalism with asceticism: it is typical of the man that if you want to catch him at lunchtime you give Smith Square's pubs and restaurants a miss – he'll be in the transport café round the corner.

After the election, real choices will need to be made. Is it worth time and energy struggling to regain control of the TUC when they are needed for harassing the government? Will set piece confrontations work against Thatcher?

Beneath their assurances that they do not differ politically, there are differences in emphasis between Todd and Wright, in the sort of political codewords they use. Beneath these I suspect there lie two potential general secretaries with much the same aims. The real choice the TGWU is making is which one of them is best able to carry them out. It can't afford to make the wrong choice. □

THIS ENGLAND

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□ Mr Thatcher said people with an innate hostility to 'big business' were making politically motivated attacks'. He said: 'I am responsible to three people on this planet. One of them is my mother, the second is the Almighty, and the third is me.' – *Observer* (H. Lintott)

□ Mr Ainsley Huskisson, 50, successfully wrote the Lord's Prayer four times on the back of an ordinary 12½p stamp yesterday. 'It's been my ambition for 20 years,' he said, 'and it's totally legible if you use a magnifying glass.' – *Daily Telegraph* (R. A. England)

□ Dulwich Hamlet have signed a younger brother of Emeka Nwajiobi who left them for Luton last month. The Dulwich manager said: 'His name is practically unpronounceable so we have decided to call him 'Nigel'. – *Guardian* (D. Tatchell)

CHESTERFIELD

Truce breaks over Tatchell

Bob Woffinden monitors Benn's coverage so far

HAD IT NOT been for Torvill and Dean's row of sixes, the Chesterfield by-election would doubtless have been all over the front pages on Wednesday. For the first time in the campaign, long-awaited sparks flew between the media and the Labour camp.

'The media launched their first manoeuvre of the campaign yesterday with unfounded stories that the failed Bermondsey candidate, Peter Tatchell, had been instructed to go home after arriving in Chesterfield to canvass' (*Morning Star*, 15 Feb). Whether or not the stories were 'unfounded' was in dispute. *The Times*, which had first carried the story, insisted that 'the report had been checked with three separate sources and confirmed' (15 Feb). According to the *Daily Mail*, 'party officials were anxious to avoid any damaging publicity, but Benn did not appear to share their concern' (15 Feb). He unequivocally invited Tatchell to return. 'I am very proud of him and a great admirer of his' (*Guardian*, 15 Feb).

Simultaneously, another flare-up occurred, when Benn apparently impugned the professional integrity of the BBC's Vincent Hanna. 'He is spending £4,000 a day, and if you watch any programme you can see that Hanna is the SDP candidate. The BBC think they can take over the election' (*The Times*, 15 Feb). Hanna's most recent campaign report on *Newsnight* (13 Feb) had provided no basis for such an accusation.

Although Britain's golden pair and pregnant princess, as well as the USSR's dead leader, have helped keep Benn out of the limelight, the journalists were waiting for something newsworthy while the Left were united in the firm expectation of dirty tricks from the media. 'Roy Hattersley predicted that newspapers would attempt to rescue what he called a disastrous government and a discredited Prime Minister with decoys and booby traps in the three weeks to polling day' (*The Times*, 14 Feb); equally, 'there is no doubt that apart from reporting the campaign, their (the media's) role is to divert its course and as often as possible to put Benn and his campaigners on the defensive' (*Morning Star*, 11 Feb).

It is beginning to seem as though the Benn campaign is perversely determined to ensure that such prophecies are fulfilled. The Tatchell and Hanna controversies marked a profound change in the atmosphere. Up till then the Labour Party was seen to be running what the *Financial Times* termed 'a highly professional operation' (9 Feb). Monica Foot, Benn's press agent in Chesterfield, had told the *New Statesman* on Monday that 'the local papers have been smashing' and that the nationals had given the party 'a fair crack of the whip'.

The Liberal (Alliance) candidate, Max Payne, a philosophy lecturer at Sheffield Polytechnic, helped. According to Margaret van Hattem, he is 'the least organised of the three main candidates and seems badly in need of a little professional back-up and organisation. He hopes that a combination of anti-Benn and anti-Thatcher sentiment will propel him to Westminster, but he seems uncertain how best to mobilise it' (*Financial Times*, 9 Feb). Martin Kettle described him more bluntly as 'a real problem', explaining that 'the Liberal campaign managers are embarrassed by Payne; the national leaders think he is second-rate' (*Sunday Times*, 12 Feb).

While Conservative Nick Bourne gained some press sympathy for his guts in appearing on the same platform as Tony Benn before an overwhelmingly hostile student audience at Chesterfield Technical College, Payne had pulled out of the confrontation, unconvincingly pleading 'a prior engagement'. Altogether, he hardly seems the stuff of which 24-hour heroes are made. He seems to lack entirely the qualities of vigour and resilience which propelled Liberals like David Alton, Bill Pitt and Simon Hughes to by-election success.

It is, of course, uncertain whether the Alliance actually wants to win the seat. Certainly, David Owen must believe that the only prospect of a revival in SDP fortunes lies in Tony Benn's early return to Parliament, where he could foment disunity and extremism in Labour's ranks, and go 'rummaging through the cupboards to fish out all those inconvenient policies we've hidden away in his absence', to quote Austin Mitchell who, as a Labour MP, is inexplicably but no doubt lucratively exploring the limits of popular journalism with a weekly column in the *Sun*.

Distrusting the press so – and distrusting Benn's understanding of it – his campaign managers had hoped the flurry of major news stories would continue. The GCHQ wrangle is due to come to a head on polling day itself. Judging by the scrupulously fair *Daily Mail* coverage (14 Feb) of its opening exchanges, the campaign could even have been fought by the Queensberry rules.

Tony Benn succeeded Eric Varley as Energy Secretary in 1976; he could still succeed him as MP for Chesterfield in 1984 – providing the Labour camp itself behaves less provocatively towards the media. □

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Mr. R. Goldie, Glasgow
"The decision must be individual as anything else strikes at the basic right to freedom of choice."

Ms Margaret T[illegible]on, London
"I think people sh[illegible]e left alone to decide wh[illegible] want to do with thei[illegible]d-earned money."

Mr. A. L. Duff, Manchester
"As a non-smoker, which is my own choice, I think that people should have the right to smoke or not based on freedom of choice – not the will of the Government."

Ms. K. Saville, Oldham
"As a British citizen, I feel that the decision should be my own – not dictated by financial reasons imposed on me by the Government of the day."

Ms. Karen Brown, Bury
"It is up to the individual if he or she would like to smoke. Tax is high enough to begin with. So why does the Government keep constantly putting the tax up?"

Ms. Anne Rowe, Camberley
"The right to smoke or not is up to the individual."

Ms. C. Wood, Kilmalcolm
"It is unfair to have such a high taxation on cigarettes . . . when other luxury-class items are taxed at 15%."

Mr. J. Parker, Sevenoaks
"I am a non-smoker, but [illegible]cept that other people [illegible]ould have the choice to [illegible]oke or not. The idea of [illegible]ing that choice out of [illegible]tence is unfair and [illegible]emocratic."

Mr. D. A. Martin, Hockley
"The tax on tobacco is in my opinion a most unfair revenue raised and steps should be taken to reduce the rate."

9 out of 10 [illegible]people wish to be free to [illegible]decide whether they will smoke or not.

Unfair taxation is tak[illegible]ng that freedom away.

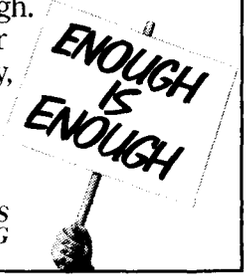
Even though they might not be smokers, ordinary people want to be free to decide about smoking for themselves.

The taxes on cigarettes are unfair compared with most other products. Excessive tax means that smoking is being put out of the reach of many people, and the decision is no longer theirs.

A recent poll* conducted by NOP [illegible]arket Research showed that 9 out of 10 [illegible]ople felt that smoking was a matter for [illegible]rsonal choice.

The tax burden falls upon everyone, but th[illegible]smoker is paying more than his fair share. [illegible]ven 43% of non-smokers agree that the[illegible]x on cigarettes is already too high.

[illegible]r people who want to decide for the[illegible]elves, the time has come to say, 'Enou[illegible]h is Enough'.



*NOP Market Research Ltd., July/Nov. 1983

ISSUED BY THE TOBACCO ADVISORY C[illegible]NCIL: SPEAKING UP FOR SMOKERS
Gle[illegible]ouse, Stag Place, London SW1E 5AG

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DIARY

The most pernicious distortion of English at the moment comes from Reagan's America. You may have noticed how words like 'secret' and 'covert' have now come to mean 'well-publicised truths that are only denied officially'. Last month *Time* magazine reported directly from 'the secret site' of a new 10,000-foot landing strip built by the US for *contra* attacks on Nicaragua. *Time* was investigating the US helicopter that had been hit while not flying over Nicaragua when it was not assisting operations there. Last week it was reported that Pentagon 'manoeuvres' in Honduras are planned to last five years . . . What the US has actually undertaken in Central America is an 'undeclared war'.

○

Or what Nixon would call 'Real Peace', the title of his latest execrable book. When he was President, he talked to his aides in expletives. However, it seems that his conversation with other so-called statesmen was fatuous to the point of tautology. For example, to back up his assertion that economic exchange with Communist countries will not bring 'real peace', Nixon states: 'As Konrad Adenauer told me in 1967 just before his death, "Trade is trade." ' Amazing! I was reminded of Nixon's own remark on his first visit to the Great Wall of China: 'It is a great wall.' Perhaps we should begin to list the Great Truisms of World Leaders.

○

Fritz Spiegl is an acute observer of the way English is trashed and banalised. His *Keep Taking the Tabloids* (Pan, £1.75) will give many a hack a well-deserved sleepless night – if they read it. It is a terrifying compendium of the news media's everyday clichés, word splittings, solecisms and knee-jerk puns. Its sub-title is 'What the papers say and how they say it'. But apart from a brief plug in the *Guardian* and a three-line item in the *Sunday Express* not a single national paper dared mention the book which so scornfully observes their misuse of language and even notices that 'teething troubles are usually said to be "ironed out".' One of the funniest errors Spiegl records was deliberate. Just over a hundred years ago, the then Home Secretary gave an immensely long and vacuous speech to the House of Commons, on tenant farmers in Yorkshire. Obliged to endure the tedium of setting 10,000 words for the Parliamentary report in *The Times*, the compositor took his revenge. Half way through, he inserted: 'The speaker then said he felt inclined for a bit of fucking. I think that is very likely.' The editors apparently hoped that no one would notice, and for three days the then great paper kept silent, before it felt obliged to print a cryptic apology. People really did read *The Times* in 1882.

○

There are some traditions whose end should be welcomed, such as the upper-class presumption of the *The Times*. Yet in the face o the multinationals, whether Murdoch's c Nissan's, one of the basic reactions socialists is to seek to conserve. I was stru by this at the founding of *History Worksho* Social History Centre in Oxford. Rus College has given the new centre a s terraced house which, typically, Rap Samuel describes as an 'artisan's cott The Left needs permanent institution t do more than survive and that can a ss themselves to the public at large. So th w foundation, with its strong feminist ri- bution, is especially welcome. Oral ual documentary and family history arch are proposed, if not yet planned. On th ven- ing before the National Health rvice workshop, reported in last week's *S*, a packed inaugural meeting at Ruski tened to various papers, then the 'cor' was baptised by an even more crow party. Suitably enough, the centre wa unched with a keg of Glenny's locally-br d Eagle bitter. You can join by sending £4.00 if unwaged) to Sue Bullock, 2 orcester Place, Oxford.

○

On Saturday, Channel 4 wi e showing Hugh Brody's *People of the ds*. Timed to coincide with the Robert herty anni- versary (it includes clips fro anook of the *North* which will be shown o riday), it is a film, with beautiful came ork by Ivan

Strasburg, of the Inuit Eskimo community on the Belcher Islands. You are shown the modern settlement tune in to radio bingo, you listen to elders describing their sense of loss, somewhat in the spirit of *History Workshop*: 'Our stomachs were emptier yet our spirits were higher.' But the film is not a statement about them by a westerner, with heavy commentary. Rather, with long takes and with sub-titles over the Eskimoes talking among themselves, it takes you there, to the breathtaking scenery, and makes you feel fascinated and uncomfortable, even out of place. Will viewers accept this kind of treatment? TV rarely leaves it to them to do the thinking.

○

The decision to make the sale of scented erasers illegal strikes me as a bit daft, although personally I'm happy to see no more of what children delight in calling smelly rubbers. Much more alarming are girls' shoes. My seven-year-old daughter refused to wear ordinary ones. So I volunteered the task of persuasion and settled on the typical father's ruse of bribery. Provided she chose, and wore to school, a pair of sensible shoes, I said, she could have any pair of party shoes that she wished from the length of Oxford Street. And it was the length of Oxford Street! The smiles cracked on a blur of saleswomen as pair after pair were acclaimed and abandoned. It took an entire afternoon. The most nightmarish part, however, was due to the party shoes themselves. Some that my daughter insisted on trying had high heels with only a single, thin ankle strap. Her method of seeing if they fitted was to run around the shop, just as if she was at a party. Frequently I feared that first a strap and then an ankle would snap as she wobbled off at high speed. As much as anyone I am against State interference. But if smelly erasers can be banned, safety standards might also prevent commercial temptations from crippling small feet.

Islander

ROGER WODDIS

The Big Poop

Among the documents seiz by gloved Special Branch officers at the home Duncan Campbell, of the New Statesman, *was a stricted' British Army manual listing 24 instructio n 'how to defecate in the Arctic.'*

When going through urnalist's posses- sions,
The copper keen t rther his career
May gain through g ng voice to such ex- pressions
As 'Crikey!' or ello, what have we here?'
And every smart d tive dearly loves
To carry out his d s wearing gloves.

A thoroughgoing arch of private papers
Demands a cer n attitude of mind:
An officer must ver have the vapours,
However dar he secrets he may find.
His lips are sea , he mustn't tell a soul
How soldiers u the pottie at the Pole.

Among the Sp ial Branch's vital missions
Is guardi what occurs 'mid ice and snow:
To leak the my's twenty-four positions
Would p us at the mercy of the foe;
And so the lush, as swiftly as they can,
Freedom information down the pan.

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No illusions

AP

Konstantin Chernenko: official *Tass* image of the new Soviet leader – facade for a struggle between Cold warriors and the supporters of détente?

Stephen Cohen on the struggle for the succession

WITH THE death of Yuri Andropov and the choice of Konstantin Chernenko as his caretaker successor, there is – for the first time in the three decades since Stalin died in 1953 – a real prospect of a leadership in the Kremlin that believes more in cold war than in détente. Such a government would be the result of a long struggle inside the Soviet political establishment, but a struggle in which American policy has played a lamentable role.

Contrary to widespread assumptions, official Soviet attitudes toward East-West relations have never been monolithic. A deep ideological division has existed between Western-oriented advocates of détente and anti-Western cold warriors ever since the 1950s, when the Khrushchev leadership abandoned Stalin's Iron-Curtain isolationism for an opening to the West based on 'peaceful coexistence'. Both sides in that conflict (which recalls the nineteenth-century dispute between Russian Westernisers and Slavophiles) have found strong support in official circles. And while every Soviet leadership since Stalin has pursued a Western orientation in foreign policy, they have done so in the face of a formidable cold-war lobby. That lobby may finally prevail, if it has not already, largely because Soviet pro-détente arguments are in shambles.

Soviet proponents of détente have always insisted that significant cooperation with the West, particularly with the United States, is necessary to overcome Soviet backwardness in economic and other areas; to insure a superpower role in managing world affairs; and to avoid an unconstrained arms race and a nuclear war. The political question was whether the Soviet leadership could actually rely upon the United States to cooperate despite other Soviet international objectives and longstanding American animosity.

In the early 1970s, pro-détente analysts gave the leadership an assurance that now is their undoing. They argued that because the Soviet Union had achieved global military and political equality with the West, détente had become an 'objective necessity' for the US. As proof, they pointed to the 'business-like' détente policy of President Nixon, once America's arch cold warrior.

The Brezhnev leadership clung to that axiom throughout the deepening crisis of détente in the late 1970s and even into the 1980s. It reasoned that President Carter's haphazardly hardline policy was a temporary aberration and that Ronald Reagan would turn out to be another Nixon. But President Reagan's assault on every premise of détente – his ideological crusade against the 'evil empire', his campaign to stop the Soviet-European pipeline, and his programme to regain American military superiority – finally 'dispelled' any lingering 'illusions' in Moscow, as Andropov put it last August, and with them the 'objective necessity' thesis of the pro-détente lobby.

Soviet cold warriors, having always rejected the basic premises of any Western orientation, are the beneficiaries of that disillusionment. Espousing Russophile and xenophobic ideas from tsarist and Stalinist times, they insist that Soviet Russia's rightful 'destiny', as a political system and a great power, is fortress-like isolation from the West and principled opposition to it.

The United States – the epitome of pernicious Western values – isn't a solution to Soviet problems, but the cause of them – from crises in East Europe and Afghanistan to political dissent and social ills at home. Moreover, cold warriors argue, the West is inherently anti-Russian, as evidenced by centuries of Western conspiracies and invasions and, therefore, the United States will never accept the prerequisite of détente – Soviet security and parity in world affairs. Thus, Reagan, not Nixon, is the real face of America. And thus, for the Soviet Union, cold war is both political virtue and eternal necessity.

DISMISSED as crackpot extremism by many leading Soviet officials only a decade ago, such views now seem cogent and prudent. Coldwar ideology is more fulsome and zealous, in the Soviet press and in popular culture, than at any time since Stalin. Not all of it is directly controlled by the leadership, but some of it is. The Soviet Union has withdrawn from arms talks. A catechism of cold-war Communism, Nikolai Yakovlev's *The CIA Against the USSR*, circulates in 3 million copies and is serialised as orthodox wisdom in once pro-détente newspapers. Xenophobic and pro-Stalin novelists win coveted state prizes. And this month, the leadership authorised an ominous new law against passing 'information' to 'foreign organisations'. Meanwhile, once outspoken and influential advocates of détente are on the defensive and dispirited.

The importance of this turnround in the long struggle between Western-oriented and cold-war Communism can hardly be exaggerated. Soviet foreign and domestic policy are at stake, since the conflict is also between reform and reaction at home. The struggle, of course, is not over. Some important factors sustain the pro-détente lobby, including certain relations with the West that directly benefit Soviet élites, widespread fear of China and the threat of nuclear war.

But other factors, in addition to American policy, are abetting a cold-war outcome in Moscow. One is the rising tide of Russian nationalist sentiment, upon which cold warriors feed. Another is the growing political weight of watchdog institutions that have always promoted a 'vigilant' cold-war outlook. And now there will be the power struggles and jockeying for position in what looks like an interim period under an old

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leader. No serious or ambitious contender to succeed Chernenko is likely to wager his political fortunes on 'illusions' of détente. Indeed, any strong leadership will be greatly tempted by a stringent austerity programme at home to cope with the country's serious economic problems – and thus by the calls for sacrifice and rigid controls implicit in cold war.

American cold warriors have always denied that such policy divisions exist inside the Soviet establishment. Now, dimly perceiving otherwise, some of them even argue that a cold-war Moscow is actually in America's interest because it will divert the Soviet leadership's attention to contingent 'iron curtain' areas and away from global rivalry with the United States. That perspective is both cynical and perilous. Its consequences will be new repression in the Soviet Union and East Europe, growing East-West mistrust bred by isolation, a permanent arms race – and thus an even greater risk of nuclear war. □

Stephen F. Cohen is professor of politics at Princeton University and writes a monthly column on Soviet affairs for The Nation.

USSR: 2

Chernenko factor

Michael Simmons on the new Soviet leader

LEONID BREZHNEV, said a garrulous Russian a few years ago, is a zero; it is the figures before the zero that add up to something. In the biting cold of Tuesday's funeral in Red Square – as the wheezing and uncertain Konstantin Chernenko also looked as if he may not add up to a great deal – many of those same figures before the zero stood up to be counted. Andrei Gromyko, older than Chernenko and older even than Ronald Reagan, bore the clear stamp of authority. So did Defence Minister Ustinov. These stage managers behind the scenes at the weekend's Politburo talk-in, must be a comfort of sorts for Chernenko.

Meanwhile, those Russians who count themselves reformists know that their turn will come – sooner rather than later, they can say to themselves over the vodka, banned during the mourning period but now back on sale. Others, cashing in on the cold but clear and sunny weather may just shrug and carry on skating on the frozen river, or switch the television back to the winter Olympics, of which the coverage has continued with little interruption.

Mikhail Gorbachev, clever and thrusting and ridiculously young at 52, was the 'wishful thinking' candidate in the debate in the Kremlin last week-end. With hindsight he can be seen as a consensus figure, lighted upon by the coming generation of technocrats and sophisticated Kremlinologists everywhere, while the relatively colourless Chernenko – twenty years his senior and of uncontaminated peasant stock – proceeded to get the prize.

Many more, however, will breathe a sigh of relief. They will think that their country has momentarily returned to the sort of leadership it deserves. For these people, the

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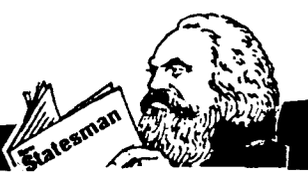

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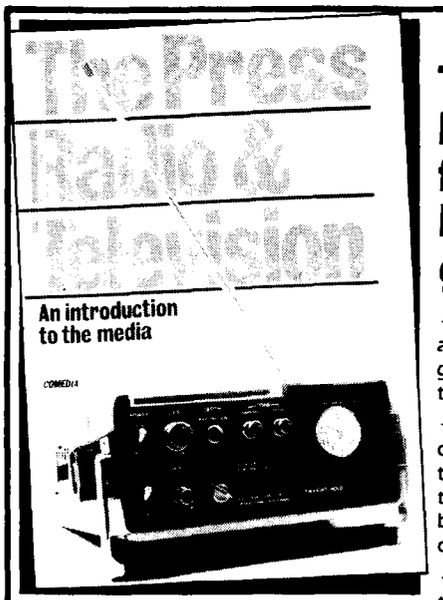

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'Andropov aberration' has already become a thing of the past. There will be much sharpening of knives among those, particularly in the regional Party hierarchies, who were purged under Andropov and now see a chance of regaining their old bases.

The measured views of Western pundits are manifestly not the views of 'ordinary Russians'. The contrast between Mrs Thatcher and the new Soviet leader, as they shook hands on Tuesday, was stark. Ronald Reagan would, ironically, have had more in common. If and when these two septuagenarians do meet, it will be a dialogue of two poor-little-elitists who both stumble over their words as they persist, still, in pulling themselves up by their country-boy bootstraps.

But many Russians can now say that whoever emerged victorious from the weekend tug-of-war ('the fight to stop Chernenko', said some newspapers which should have known better), Konstantin Chernenko himself would hardly have been discomforted. He is the embodiment of something obstinately bulky and seemingly immovable on the Soviet political landscape of 1984 which has nothing to do with hot or cold war between East and West, nothing much to do with reform or anti-reform, or even to do with Left or Right, but everything to do with the stage of development that the old-but-young country has now reached. It might be called the 'Chernenko factor'.

Outlines of this factor can be gleaned from the pile of writings that have been published under Chernenko's name. Whether he personally burned the midnight oil implied by his by-line must be open to question, but there is already a wealth of material for instant biographers and others to quarry.

In a pamphlet entitled 'Communists in the USSR', which appeared in 1978, he described the Soviet Union as 'a developed socialist society with an advanced economy, science and culture, high level of public welfare and genuine sovereignty of the people'. It sounds like Brezhnev's speechwriter on an off-day, and perhaps it was. Later, a little more grittily, he added: 'Communist society is taking shape not spontaneously but in the process of stubborn, conscious, purposeful activity of the masses led by the Party.' Such writings may strike Westerners as unimaginative and colourless, but for millions of Party members who have come to terms with the status quo, they echo their own thinking – indeed, they sound like an election address.

CERTAINLY CHERNENKO was for a while eclipsed by Andropov, but it was he who cannily proposed the ailing Andropov for the job. Maybe Andropov dislodged him early last year from the 'general manager's' job in the Politburo office, but he retained considerable control over propaganda and the media. Andropov may even have made it to Head of State last June at the Central Committee meeting, but Chernenko gave the most important speech at the same plenum – indeed one of the most important 'live' speeches of the Andropov tenure.

The day before Andropov died, *Pravda* carried a long review of the latest, enlarged edition (670 pages) of Chernenko's works. The reviewer wrote of the need for 'more and more generations of people' to thoroughly to master 'the ideological, political and moral experience of earlier generations of fighters for communism'. Chernenko emphasised, he said, that this need remains relevant because the class enemy's attacks on socialist moral values are growing in intensity along with the struggle for people's hearts and minds. The Party remained concerned 'to improve developed socialism and (a favourite Chernenko theme) to mould the new man'.

For millions of workers and peasants, *apparatchiks* and others, that makes sense. It will also do for the time being for the peace-loving policy-makers who shake aggressive fists from the ramparts of Fortress Russia.

The Chernenko factor presented enormous problems of immovability when Khruschev, then Kosygin, and most recently Andropov attempted reforms and versions of détente. Now, somewhat piquantly, the same problems will arise with Chernenko himself in office. Home-spun Leninism, even if it is Leninism, may not suffice if the technocrats and the military continue to become more articulate, or if the Party, and therefore the new Party leader, does not promote a more streamlined profile, or if some way is not found of ad-

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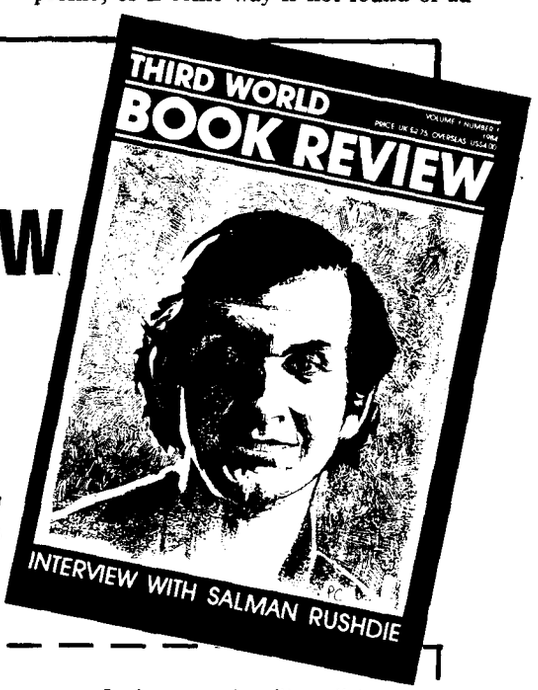

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justing to confrontation – at home and abroad.

In the earlier volume of *Writings* (Pergamon Press, 1982), Chernenko said: 'I was born into a large and poor peasant family in the Krasnoyarsk region in 1911. I lost my mother when I was a young boy. At 12, I went to work for a wealthy master to earn my own living. New Soviet life was just coming into its own, and I felt its fresh winds . . .' It is a nutshell account of his psychological make-up and his political motivation, touching and typical in the detail. It reads rather like the beginnings of a rallying call . . . but a call to what? □

Michael Simmons works for the *Guardian*.

LEBANON

Auto destruct

Patrick Cockburn explains the sudden collapse

Beirut

THE LEBANESE army was the one instrument through which President Gemayel and his American allies hoped to challenge the balance of power in Lebanon. Over the last year the mountain valleys in the Christian enclave to the north of Beirut have resounded with the crash of tank fire as US teams train fresh battalions. The political weakness of the government, opposed by Syria and the Moslem communities, was to be redressed by military means.

The policy failed when 2,500 foreigners, mostly American and British, were evacuated by helicopter from the Beirut seafront last weekend guarded by Druze militiamen. The 200 US marines arranging the evacuation looked perplexed by it all. One marine was showing a Druze, dressed in a khaki jacket, red arm band and blue jeans, how to fit the magazine into his new M-16 which he had just confiscated from the Lebanese army.

The dissolution of part of the army and the collapse of the army's hopes of expanding its control over the ridge overlooking Beirut are a measure of the political weakness of Gemayel's government. The Lebanese army is about 57 per cent Moslem, though a majority of its officers are Christian. In the 1975-76 civil war it split along sectarian lines.

Gemayel needed to prevent this happening again: his hopes of using the 37,000 men in the armed forces could only be realised if he could keep their political loyality. Yet everything he and General Tannous, the army commander, have done over the past two weeks was guaranteed to alienate the Moslem communities.

The most recent fighting started on the fringes of the southern suburbs – the stronghold of the Shiah Moslems which is ruled by Amal militiamen. An army sniper killed a member of the Amal and the gunmen in the area responded by capturing the abandoned church of St Michael's. Amal leaders say they did not know this was going to happen. 'We were having a political meeting when one of our militiamen came in and said his men had taken St Michael's,' says Dr Sam Sebleni, one of the Amal political leaders.

The fighting might have remained a skirmish: St Michael's is symbolically, not strategically, important. But the army began to use its heavy artillery on the slums of south Beirut from which a large part of the Army is recruited. The Amal claims that up to 9,000 of their soldiers come from this area or have relatives there. The consequences should not have been surprising.

Nebih Berri, the President of the Amal who had spent the previous 17 months looking for signs of conciliation from President Gemayel, called on the cabinet to resign and on soldiers to refuse to obey orders to fight. On 6 February Amal and Druze militiamen took over West Beirut. And in the heart of the capital most of the army's sixth brigade, with elements of the third and tenth brigades, joined them or did not fight.

The reaction of President Gemayel and the army command exemplified why they were unable to hold the loyalty of so many Moslems in the army. They could have tried to regain West Beirut with a full-scale military assault as soon as the insurrection started. The fifth and seventh brigades – each with a tank battalion and both newly trained and equipped by the Americans – are on the green line dividing Moslem West from Christian East Beirut.

But there was no immediate military assault and although some loyalists still held out, the army used its heavy artillery – including 155mm guns – to bombard the west of the city. Most of their fire was concentrated on a prosperous area close to the university behind the British Embassy. And at a nearby hospital 40 died and 300 were wounded in a single night.

As the gunfire eased off next morning President Gemayel had lost all political support in West Beirut. Nebih Berri described him as being worse than Nero. An exaggeration, perhaps, but as one Amal leader said a few days later: 'You don't have to be Napoleon to work out that if you shell the homes of half your army you should not be too surprised when they mutiny.'

Why did the army do it and why did President Gemayel, if motivated by a sense of self-preservation alone, alienate all the Moslem communities? The army had not fought badly in the mountain war last September and was being built up to a strength of 60,000 men. It was being re-equipped with $2 billion worth of weaponry and three battalions of helicopter troops had been trained.

The answer lies mainly in the origins of the present government. Amin Gemayel has always remained in that part of the Phalange party led by his father. His election, and that of his brother before him, was the result of the Israeli invasion when the balance of power had swung in favour of the Christians. The Palestine Liberation Organisation, which the Phalange blamed for all their troubles, had been forced to evacuate Beirut and the Syrians were glad to have just kept their army intact.

The balance of power had never been so favourable to the Christians. The US and Israel supported them, but not to the point of war with Syria. In the last 18 months the government has stumbled from defeat to defeat, but always appears bewildered by its own ill fortune and the consequences of its own mistakes.

In the days since the insurrection in West Beirut Christian leaders have explained that the rising was a cunningly organised plot by Syria. In the southern suburbs they say Palestinians are mustering to bring back the PLO. More Palestinians are said to be in Cyprus waiting to return to Beirut when the airport reopens.

The obvious and dangerous fact that the Shiah, Druze and Sunni Moslem communities – together 60 per cent of Lebanon's population – are now united against the regime is disguised by conspiracy theories. President Gemayel, breaking a week-long silence, last Sunday said that the Americans still 'fully support' him.

THE DANGER is that the more President Gemayel and the Christians are hemmed in to a small enclave in East Beirut and the valleys to the north the more they will take refuge in political fantasy. Gemayel could still try to use the remaining loyal units in the army to strengthen his position by cutting the supply road linking the Druze in the mountains to Amal militiamen in the capital. Such small military victories are still possible. Most of the brigades, including three of the best trained and best equipped units in the army are still loyal or, at least, not in a state of mutiny.

But none of this will alter the political balance which is so firmly against President Gemayel and the Christians. He is now without allies at home or abroad who can give him the support he needs – any counter-attack on West Beirut or the south of the capital will bring at least 15,000 militiamen to the streets. Foreign heavy armour might punch through but the tanks would probably be annihilated in the narrow roads. The Amal and Druze are both well equipped with rocket-propelled grenades.

Gemayel's own views seem out of touch as he sits isolated in his palace high above the city at Baabda. One wall of the modern white building has been shattered by a Grad missile fired from Druze positions in nearby mountains. There are few staff about and the palace has the atmosphere of an enormous service flat inhabited by a transient occupant.

The Voice of the Mountain, the Druze radio, calls President Gemayel the Shah of Baabda, claiming he controls no more than the square kilometre around the palace. Like the Shah five years ago Amin Gemayel is now desperately making political concessions which might have saved him earlier. He now concedes what he has already lost. □

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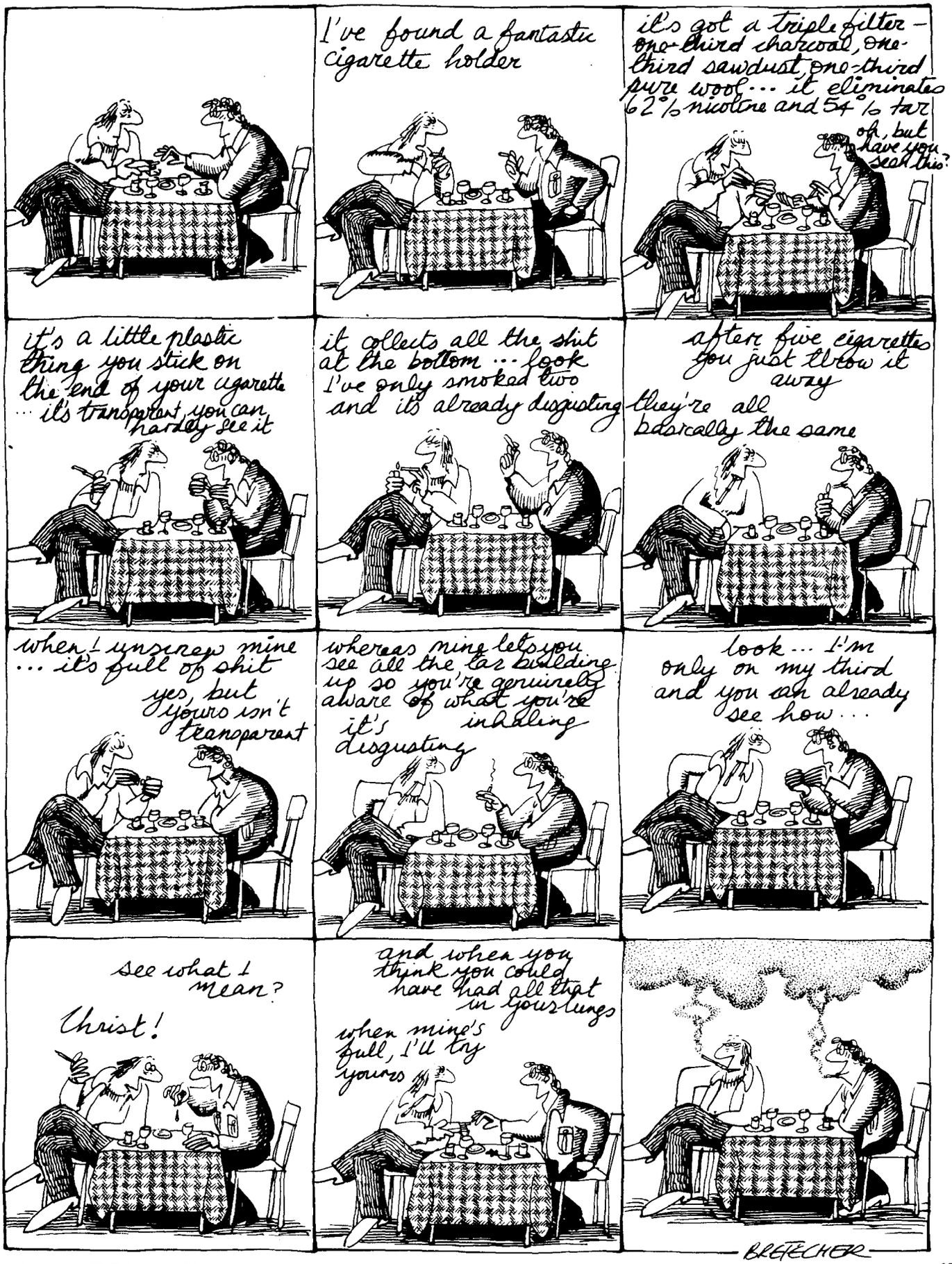
BRETECHER

NO SMOKE WITHOUT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it's got a triple filter – one-third charcoal, one-third sawdust, one-third pure wool... it eliminates 62% nicotine and 54% tar
oh, but have you seen this?
it's a little plastic thing you stick on the end of your cigarette ... it's transparent, you can hardly see it
it collects all the shit at the bottom ... look I've only smoked two and it's already disgusting
after five cigarettes you just throw it away
they're all basically the same
when I unscrew mine ... it's full of shit
yes, but yours isn't transparent
whereas mine lets you see all the tar building up so you're genuinely aware of what you're inhaling
it's disgusting
look ... I'm only on my third and you can already see how ...
see what I mean?
Christ!
and when you think you could have had all that in your lungs
when mine's full, I'll try yours
BRETECHER

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Isn't it ironic that old people, who are amongst the least privileged members of society are also the least likely to voice their own case?

And hence, the easiest to ignore.

But old people have needs, even though they may not shout about them.

In particular, they have transport needs. The need to visit shops. The need to visit the doctor or the hospital. The need to visit family and friends or to enjoy an outing.

Needs that, in most cases, are served by the bus.

The trouble is the bus is under threat.

More and more services are falling under the axe – at a time, incidentally, when more and more of us are reaching old age.

It's a problem that can affect us all. After all, most of us have elderly relatives.

And most of us grow old.

It doesn't matter whether you live in the middle of a bustling city or in the heart of the countryside, when you're old the bus is more than transportation. It's a life-line to the rest of the world – taking you to other people, and just as important, bringing other people to you.

For the majority of old people who have neither a car

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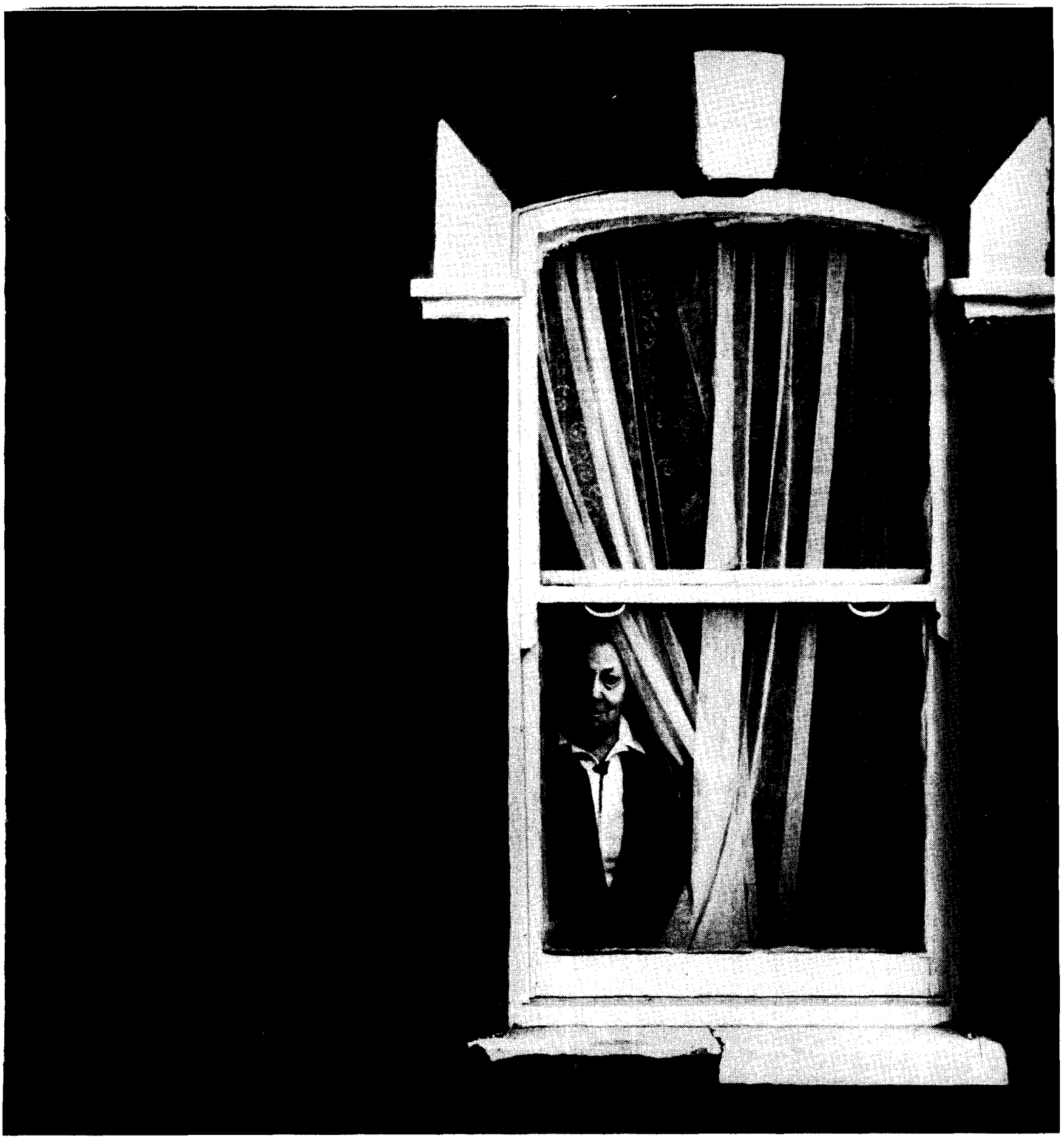

nor the means to afford one, the bus is a vital means of hanging onto a much cherished independence.

Of course human values have to be balanced against economic ones.

But have we got the balance right?

This was one of the questions asked at a recent Convention in London attended by a wide range of community interests.

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LETTERS

The John Cox story, Pt 1

John Minnion, co-editor The CND Story, *Bournville, Birmingham*

I don't know what evidence John Cox has for his assertion that 'most members of CND believe that the primary blame for the arms race rests with Nato, the US and Britain' (Letters 10 February). He might be right. But the trouble is that this (assumed) belief is too often wheeled out by our opponents to explain away CND.

I suspect that ultimately CND, and indeed the whole disarmament movement from the Direct Action Committee in 1957 to the Greenham women in the 1980s, owes its energy to a far more basic insight. It is simply that nuclear weapons mean world wars are no longer survivable.

There is a reason for hammering this point home: it represents the crucial difference between CND and the nuclear disarmament movement on the one hand, and the peace movement of the early 1950s on the other. The latter rested too often on the fragile belief that we would be threatened by no really dangerous enemy for the indefinite future.

I tried to make this point in an article the *Morning Star* asked me to write 2½ years ago. However, it was edited out without prior agreement and despite assurances to the contrary.

Tony Chater, Editor, Morning Star, *London EC1*

John Cox (Letters 10 February) has completely distorted the position of the *Morning Star* over what he terms 'the treatment I have received.' Your readers have a right to know the facts.

There was a reporting error in a report we published of a speech by John Cox. The moment he drew our attention to it we published a long letter from him so that the matter could be corrected. This letter, however, provoked a deluge of letters extremely critical of John Cox's position. We published some of these. Joan Ruddock then sent us a letter putting the CND's position. We published this and decided that it should be the last letter in the discussion. We therefore announced that the discussion was closed.

As soon as we had done this, John Cox raised that he wanted to reply to some of the letters which he considered were distorting his position. We therefore agreed to consider a letter from him, but explained that we would like him to write it in a way that would not create demands from other readers to reply.

The letter John Cox sent to us was very long and was written in a way that would have led to demands for the right to reply to what he had said. It would, in effect, have reopened a discussion we had closed. We therefore suggested cuts and John Cox gave his agreement to these.

I would submit that these facts show that John Cox's attacks on the *Morning Star* are without foundation.

Porn laws

Martha Roth, Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA

Thank you, Ruth Wallsgrove, for the balanced account of Minneapolis' proposed civil rights ordinance on pornography (*NS* 27 January) – much fairer than most reports in the US press.

Opponents of the proposal persist in regarding it as a free-speech issue, whereas Catherine MacKinnon has based her support for it squarely as a matter of power inequities between men and women. It is women, after all, who are overwhelmingly the victims of rape, incest, spouse abuse, and pornographic depiction.

Old liberals have trouble with this argument. Having grown comfortable with the old ideology of the law, they sniff, uneasily, a possible shift in social policy. The ordinance feels like a piece of matriarchal legislation – a comfort and a challenge.

Smoke in your eyes?

A. M. Sachs, London N4

I read with some excitement your report of the 'Who Cares' conference (*NS* 10 February). Musing happily on the prospect of a Britain in which our individuals are encouraged and educated to take responsibility for their own health, I turned a few pages, to be confronted by the full-page advert from the Tobacco Advisory Council. Enough is enough for poor smokers who are too heavily taxed for their generosity in sharing their toxic inhalations, even with those who have made a positive choice to avoid tobacco. Freedom of choice to respond or resist the advertising blandishments of the Tobacco Advisory Council!

I'm confused. Is the *NS* for a 'health-promoting economy' or are you just 'speaking up for smokers'?

Beating the favourite

Alexander Perkins, London N19

It seems to me that Bob Woffinden has become so engrossed with the power of the self-fulfilling prophecy that it has actually got the better of him.

In his article 'Let Battle Commence' (*NS* 3 February), he states his displeasure in Mr Benn's uphill struggle in the Chesterfield by-election. Why? Because by-elections used to be simply the straightforward barometers of political climate before the camera lenses nosed their way through the double doors of the town hall, and the superstar psephologists, Crewe, Cole and previously Mackenzie, won us all over to the philosophy: 'Never mind the quality, beat the favourite.'

He may well be right. Convincing the electorate of its ability to join forces and down the tyrant worked wonders at Bermondsey. Using the polls to advertise the possibility of an upset is becoming standard practice on Fleet Street. Therefore pessimism in the Labour ranks at Chesterfield must be the last thing that Tony Benn wants engendered by the press. Accordingly Bob Woffinden, who can now be known as Cassandra, speaks of the 'inevitable sensational outcome' at Chesterfield, and goes on to remind us that the Labour Party will scarcely be damaged by the result, which will be passed off as the freak it will surely become.

Ironically it is Benn himself who holds the biggest grudge against the poll punters, but with friends like Bob Woffinden around, who needs enemies?

A woman started it all

Mrs Beatrice M. Jones, Wimborne, Dorset

Regarding the article 'Men only please' (*NS* 3 February), it would be interesting to know how many working men's club members today are aware that it was a *woman* who was instrumental in setting up the very first working men's club.

Lady Wimborne, the wife of Sir John Guest, owner of the Dowlais Iron Foundry, was worried by the fact that the men of Dowlais had no alternative but a public house to meet in their free time, and made arrangements for a club to be set up; hence the first working men's club. Eventually these were to spread over the whole country – England as well as Wales.

The In touch

Sheila Jeffrey, London E6

I am fascinated to learn that, after all these years, Zuleika Dobson is alive and well and writing letters to the editor (*NS* 3 February). Can we now expect Max Beerbohm himself to make an appearance in your pages – as a replacement for Bretécher, *peut-être?*

Information wanted

Mark Dickinson, c/o Manchester Free Press, 59 Whitworth Street, Manchester M1 3WT

I am researching a book on the *Messenger* dispute and would like to appeal through your pages for eyewitness accounts from people present on the picket line, in particular on the night 29/30 Nov. Accounts of arrests and/or injuries sustained from victims are of prime importance, but I also welcome accounts from eyewitnesses to alleged ill-treatment of identified or identifiable victims. These are of crucial significance to the events of that night as so many incidents went unreported and unrecorded.

I would also very much like to hear details of any questions or protests made to MPs, police or whomever and the replies received.

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Justin Wintle

A pinch of aji no moto

A Japanese Mirror
IAN BURUMA *Cape* £9.95

Much has been made of Japan's isolation. Western commentators, brought up in the meta-community of Christian states, are inevitably impressed by the long periods in Japan's history when, to all intents and purposes, the country had no contact with the outside world. And yet when contact has occurred the effects have been decisive, even traumatic. Buddhism, Confucianism, Chinese and Americo-European culture have each had a critical and lasting impact. For a people who constantly return to an ideal of national purity the Japanese have been curiously vulnerable to outside influences.

It is not then isolation of itself so much as isolation combined with episodic cultural invasion which, I suspect, explains many of the peculiarities of Japanese society, and which sets up just the kind of permeating ambivalence that makes writing about Japan at once enormously exciting and deeply frustrating. And the Japanese themselves do everything they can to exacerbate the challenge. 'I am Japanese' is a phrase that recurs again and again in their conversation with foreigners, offered sometimes as an apology, sometimes as a declaration that the speaker is somehow absolved from having to take account of an alien code, an alien logic, and sometimes as both. But then the Japanese have had their fair share of bifurcation to contend with as well. On the one hand there has been a steadily growing corps of Japan enthusiasts, beginning with the amiable Lafcadio Hearn and continuing through to Roland Barthes, whose *Empire of Signs* (trans. 1982) must surely rank as the number one example of stupefaction disguised as literature; and on the other hand, since the war at least, there has been no shortage of people willing to castigate the Japanese as a higher form of yellow peril. For both parties perhaps Japan's sin has been her success.

A Japanese Mirror is an audacious, compelling and entirely readable attempt to get to grips with the paradoxes, even if it is not particularly scholarly (the index is execrable), and even if it does pander, in the manner of nearly every other cultural assessment of Japan, to the quest for national identity which the Japanese are so expert at packaging for foreign as well as domestic consumption. By mixing fairly conventional sociological, anthropological and psychological arguments, borrowed largely from such worthy predecessors as Ruth Benedict and Ivan Morris, with his own brand of hard-hitting, and just occasionally scabrous, journalism, Ian Buruma achieves, if not a balanced synthesis, at least an entirely contemporary view of a complex and important society. And, although the scope of his book is limited, I can think of no other account that will tell the reader so much in so little space.

Just how different are the Japanese? And why are they so different? At the heart of these difficult questions is that old bogey, the dichotomy between nature and nurture. Are the idiosyncrasies of Japanese society to be explained by its past? Or has history itself been supplied with a novel kind of raw material?

My own view is that the differences, such as they are, should be treated as no more and no less than historical concomitants. Recently attempts have been made to show, for example, that the Japanese brain is not like other brains. But the thesis which this kind of research endeavours to validate ignores the overwhelming, if mainly silent, evidence. The fact that the Japanese are able to interact with the rest of mankind in all the essential ways (linguistically, sexually, commercially), at least when they want to, should rule against any notion that they are a different species either of homo sapiens or of nation. A different variety maybe, but then aren't we all? To suggest that Japan is a special case in some way is at once pretentious and trivial, a clear instance of barking up the wrong bamboo pole.

Buruma I think recognises this. If he is finally to be classed among the enthusiasts (his conclusion that the Japanese are intrinsically a gentle people is as incongruous as it would be if applied to any other division of humanity), he is not above taking what he sees and hears with a pinch of *aji no moto*. And seeing and hearing are important elements in his prismatic book. For while much of the ground that he covers will be familiar to anyone acquainted with the literature of Japan, at least equal space is given over to summarising modern Japanese cinema, theatre and other recreational facilities, such as the stylised brothels in Tokyo where the girls are dressed as airline hostesses, tarzan janes or hospital matrons.

What is attempted, and in large measure achieved, is a reconciliation between the new downmarket cultural forms to be found in the big cities and traditional values as exemplified in the classics. Where the picture is incomplete is that, while Buruma is good at spotting Western influences at work within the native idiom, he fails sufficiently to acknowledge that the major entertainment listings, including networked television programming, may contain anything up to 75% foreign (mainly American) product. Thus, while he quite rightly draws our attention to Tora-san (Mister Tiger) as a homespun variant of Charlie Chaplin (with, for my money, a fortuitous dollop of Marty Allen), and tells us that his bi-annual films, released at New Year and Bon, are important events in the national calendar, he doesn't really indicate that the arrival of *Star Wars* or David Bowie are greeted with equal if not greater excitement. Samurai and yakusa movies provide a counterpart to cow-

Our sisters under their wigs

Camera Press

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boys and gangsters, but because they are recognisably genre pieces local audiences almost certainly give them less attention than Buruma warrants.

His book is subtitled 'Heroes and Villains of Japanese Culture', but this tells only half, and precisely half, the story. Whereas Morris, in his most generalised survey (*The Nobility of Failure*, 1975), focussed attention on ritual suicide, Buruma goes straight for the jugular: sex. And a very elegant job he makes of it. Sexual roles, he tells us, are differentiated in broad alignment with the characters of the gods in Shinto mythology, Shinto being the one religion in Japan which has not been in part at least imported. These deities, and especially Amaterasu the Sun Goddess and Susanoo her darkling brother, are sometimes orderly, sometimes unruly, but can never pretend to be an embodiment of morality. On the contrary, in the key myths, their behaviour is distinctly amoral – unless (and this seems to be an important aspect of Japanese behaviour) being 'true to your feelings' can be classed as a form of morality. Indeed, as far as Amaterasu and Susanoo are concerned, they exemplify fairly universal patterns of sibling rivalry at its adolescent phase. We are dealing therefore, Buruma tells us, with a society in which absolute moral values are not present *ab initio*.

The siblings, closely involved in the creation story, between them preside over the country. From this Buruma extrapolates a simple but effective shape for his thematic narrative. Half the book is about the Japanese woman, and half about the Japanese man, in their various guises, with a bridging chapter on both-way transvestitism. In line with the legends, Amaterasu has decidedly got the upper hand over her brother, and so it should come as no surprise that Japan is woman-dominated. Indeed it would seem that the Japanese are even more hung up about their mothers than the Italians. But if there is a clear-cut precedent for the passivity of the modern salary-man (computer coolie?) in Susanoo's repression, when he breaks out he does so with a sadistic vengeance. Thus it is that the tough guy has a much longer pedigree in Japan than he does in the West, where, *pace* Hercules, the Christlike gentleman was the ideal hero at least until the mid-19th century.

In the absence of Jove or Jehovah anything may happen, and in Japan it usually does. But there are strong restraints as well, and here Buruma is less illuminating. If most women do not run amok *à la* Amaterasu at her most tempestuous, then that is because of effective behavioural codes. But while these are sometimes described, there is no clue as to their origin. To what extent are they indigenous, to what extent are they supplied by Buddhist and Confucian precepts? Buruma does not tell us, nor does he go sufficiently far into the business world which, trade being what it is, is what we really need to know about. Nonetheless, *A Japanese Mirror*, with its rich and sexy anecdotage, is an engaging, at times disturbing read, not least because its author, having derived his framework from the gods, knows when to pull a screen on them. □

BIOGRAPHY
Alan Bold

Making up

Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle
ZDZISLAW NAJDER *Cambridge* £19.50
Conrad Under Familial Eyes
ed. ZDZISLAW NAJDER *Cambridge* £19.50

As Zdzislaw Najder admits, there are peculiar problems confronting the biographer of Conrad. As a subject he is especially elusive since he carefully covered up his autobiographical tracks: he destroyed his own notes, discarded most letters he received and did not keep a diary. There are so many biographical gaps that Conrad can seem, according to Najder, 'a foundling from an unknown country, a hermit, a unique specimen'. When Conrad commented on his own life he freely translated his past into an imaginative fiction, though Najder feels 'it would not do to accuse him of "lying"'. After working on his biography for 20 years Najder is well placed to offer the hypothesis 'that literary creativity was for Conrad also a compensative activity, a making-up for the insufficiences of his own life and character, that among other functions it was psychotherapeutic'. Most writers exhibit a creative duality; for Conrad it was the central feature of his life.

The literary problem of identity solved in Najder's massive biographical chronicle is indicated in the documentary evidence Najder has assembled in his anthology of 'familial' texts (translated, like the biography, by Halina Carroll-Najder). In 1857 Conrad's father Apollo Korzeniowski wrote a poem 'To my son born in the 85th year of Muscovite oppression'. In it he commands his son to 'Be a *Pole*!' After Conrad left Poland, in 1874, he seemed to disregard this duty by pursuing his ambition to be an English author, and was criticised, by Poles, for his lack of 'Polishness'. Reviewing a Polish translation of *Lord Jim*, in 1905, Wiktor Gomulicki searched in vain for 'Polish traits in Conrad's works' and concluded, dismissively, that Conrad's style was eccentrically English and that 'the plot of the novel is thoroughly English, marine, exotic – not in the least "ours".'

It must be stressed, that for most of Conrad's life there was no Polish state; he was 61 when Poland was revived as a republic in 1918. His response was an essay 'The Crime of Partition' and a letter, of 25 January 1919, in which he showed depression at England's general indifference to the Polish situation and annoyance at what he took to be a cynical compromise. 'If the Alliance had been differently combined the Western Powers would have delivered Poland to the German learned pig with as little compunction as they were ready to give it up to the Russian mangy dog'. Yet he also insisted that 'my concern is for England, which engages all my affections and all my thoughts'. In Najder's opinion that statement was intended ironically because 'Poland was in fact not only the centre of Conrad's attention and the principal cause of his vexation but also the factor determining his entire outlook'.

Najder portrays his subject as an outsider who responded impulsively to extraordinary circumstances. He was three when his father was arrested and sentenced, with his wife, to exile in Russia. He was seven when his mother died, partly as a result of the conditions she endured in Russia. He was eleven when his father died in 1869. During his traumatic childhood Conrad's health deteriorated and it is at least arguable, so Najder suggests, that his epilepsy was psychosomatically induced. It was not, though, Conrad's health that led him to leave his homeland for a life at sea; it was, Najder contends, the romantic temperament of 'a sickly and ambitious dreamer who could not forgive the world for not fulfilling his expectations, and who thirsted for adventure and probably above all for independence and freedom of movement'.

Leaving Poland was not, to Conrad, a complete rejection of his father's ideals as he subsequently embodied, in his life and art, the sense of freedom that Apollo advocated in politics. Conrad was driven by a determination to succeed, to go further – geographically and artistically – than his father. By 1889 he was conscious that his career in seamanship was of limited significance so he resigned the command of the *Otago* and (as Najder has it) settled in London to find 'an occupation that could compensate for his failures in life and help him cope actively with his inner perplexities'. He began to write *Almayer's Folly* and did so in English. Najder believes that Conrad chose English, rather than French or Polish, for two related reasons: first, English had, for Conrad, a literary dimension that was universally appreciated; second, the Polish novel was in its infancy. Nevertheless, Najder assures the reader that an analysis of

Matthew Sweeney

The Lame Waltzer

Crushed by an ambulance, he survived
to grow cacti for a living
and wear out tapes of Strauss.
We grew used to the lilt in the sea air
heard through holes in the wind,
to the limping shadow on the curtain
on the half-bright August nights
before the marquee pegged in town.

Together we traced his missing years –
his mail came from Germany, and once
a truck with Munich numberplates
braked on the brae to ask me
where Herr Coyne, the cacti grower, lived.
Ah ja, I said, you want
the best lame waltzer in Europe,
and I aimed them at the tideline.

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Conrad's style 'reveals the imprint of Polish in all his works'. Conrad the outsider had found his element in fiction but was never, linguistically, entirely at his ease in it.

Najder's biography reconstructs – in staggering detail down to 'the state of [Mrs Conrad's] knees' – the nature of Conrad's life. The impression is of immense artistic energy and what Najder – himself now living in exile from Poland – projects as an essentially Polish concept of dignity, a concern for 'one's feeling of self-worth'. Suffering from a 'depressive disposition' Conrad came to feel that his restless life would cohere if he could remake it in an artistic image of consistency. Other writers on Conrad have taken his work as autobiographical gospel; Najder's chronological account brilliantly separates the facts from the fiction which thereby acquires a new status. □

HISTORY
Patricia Craig

Lady reason

The Book of the City of Ladies
CHRISTINE DE PIZAN *Picador* £8.95 & £2.50

This early feminist work, published in 1405, and last translated into English in 1521, was inspired by the prevalence of mistrust and misconception surrounding women's lives. The book opens with Christine in her library, dismayed and discouraged by the anti-feminist pronouncements she's confronted with. Women, she learns from her vast reading, are greedy, rash, unchaste, foolish and feeble. They are fit for nothing but bearing children and sewing. They should be kept in ignorance, according to Philippe de Navarre, whose voice was only one of many: 'Women should not learn to read or write unless they are going to become nuns, as much harm may come from such knowledge . . . . ' (We're reminded of the English educationalist of the last century who remarked in all seriousness that the brains of women 'cannot stand much evening reading'.)

Christine falls into a state of despondency, from which she's rescued by the arrival of three allegorical figures, the Ladies Reason, Rectitude and Justice. The task in front of her is outlined, and she tackles the work with gusto. A series of anecdotes concerning famous women ensues – scholars, innovators, dispensers of justice and martyrs all get a showing. A female embodiment is found for every human quality of distinction, from the Amazon lady who doesn't baulk at chopping off her enemy's head and immersing it in a bucket of blood, to the charmed virgin who survives being crushed by a wheel and having rivers of boiling oil poured over her.

These testify to feminine powers of fortitude and stalwartness, but it's undoubtedly more agreeable to read about Nicostrata, who invented the Latin alphabet, or Minerva, with whom the techniques of sheep-shearing, carding, spinning and weaving originated. As an instance of female constancy we have the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, complete with Wall and Lion, though not nearly so funny as in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* version. Christine de Pizan doesn't dissociate herself from the current 15th-century view of chastity as the supreme virtue in women and a good many celebrated virgins, martyrs and virtuous wives are brought in to add to the growing population. Finally the virgin Mary herself, at the behest of Justice, is installed in Christine's city, now a well-stocked refuge for upstanding ladies.

Christine de Pizan (1365-1431) was born in Venice and grew up at the French court, where her father was employed as astrologer; contrary to the practice of the times, she received an extensive education. Among her numerous published works were a biography of Charles V and a poem in praise of Joan of Arc. Her feminism – with its emphasis on female rectitude of every sort – may seem pretty moderate and sedate by present-day standards; *The Book of the City of Ladies* is nevertheless an honourable undertaking, and the new translation a welcome piece of scholarship. □

BIOGRAPHY
Bob Woffinden

The entertainer

Sidney Bernstein: A Biography
CAROLINE MOOREHEAD *Cape* £12.95

It might be easier if I told you what Sidney Bernstein *hasn't* done. He's never ventured into the recording industry; neither has he owned a football team, or a daily newspaper. Over the course of this century, he's been a pivotal influence in just about every other sphere of UK popular entertainment.

He's the one man alive in Britain today who can claim to have been equally responsible both for filling the cinemas and for emptying them again. In the Thirties his suburban chain of Granada theatres attracted customers in their thousands; from the Sixties it was Granada's *Coronation Street* which kept the people at home.

Bernstein was born in 1899 with, as he wryly confessed, a silver screen in his mouth. By the time he inherited the family business of five theatres in 1922, he was already a leading cinema impresario, having arranged private film shows for both the Prime Minister and the Royal Family. Nevertheless, he initially presented music-hall in his own theatres. After performing in one of these Marie Lloyd collapsed and died; Bernstein kept the dressing-room locked for over ten years in her memory.

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Oxford University Press

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From 1927, the cinema took over. With his theatre designer, the Russian director Theodore Komisarjevsky, he created venues whose opulence and splendour made them architectural equivalents of the movies themselves. Christened 'Granada' – a name he'd remembered from Spanish hiking holidays – they became exotic refuges from the world outside.

Hand-in-hand with his entrepreneurial expertise went a keen appreciation of the more serious aspects of the medium. He was a founder of the Film Society which, with its Bloomsbury membership, represented the first attempt of the British intelligentsia to come to terms with the cinema as art, and was responsible for bringing outstanding titles to the country for the first time.

And so it went on. Bernstein, a millionaire Socialist (he'd been a Labour councillor in the Twenties), always had his bread buttered on both sides. In 1940 he became films adviser to the Ministry of Information, and by the end of the war was running the Allies' film operations. Almost the first taste of freedom for the liberated countries was a film show organised by Bernstein.

By the time commercial television arrived, he should have been in an unassailable position to obtain a division of the spoils. He applied for the franchise in the North, having ascertained that it was the area with the highest correlation between rainfall and population density. In the event, he almost didn't get it. Government circles, believing that he was a Communist, put pressure on the ITA to decline Granada's application. Fortunately, the ITA resisted. There was no substance in the allegation, though it surfaced intermittently.

Today, Granada is the only survivor of the four original independent TV companies. Its early profits enabled it to diversify into books and, less logically, motorway service stations.

Not since Trollope's autobiography have I read the narrative of a life apparently so fulfilled in every conceivable respect. I say 'apparently' because this book is rarely illuminating about Bernstein's own personality. Moorehead, a family friend, has chosen not to betray (or not to discover) the confidences of a private man who's always shunned public celebrity. This creates the irritating impression that she doesn't quite trust the reader with information. One of the major projects of Bernstein's life, for example, was a war atrocities film, made in Germany in 1945 with Hitchcock as director. Ever since, it has languished in the Imperial War Museum. The reader is told virtually nothing of Bernstein's own reaction to its rejection. Elsewhere, Moorehead does vouchsafe the comment that 'as with most matters about which he cares deeply, he says little'. His reticence and the author's dutiful detachment make this an oddly formal biography.

It is fascinating, nevertheless, because it's one hell of a story. No one could begrudge Bernstein any part of his unparalleled success. He has been an exceptionally benign influence on the development of popular culture. His guiding philosophy – that 'the general public will always respond to excellence' – has served him to the end. □

FICTION
Roger Lewis

Brats

Train to Hell
ALEXEI SAYLE *Methuen* £7.50
The Wasp Factory
IAIN BANKS *Macmillan* £7.95

Favoured comedians have often been spiteful. The Marx Brothers twit and gull everyone they meet without mercy. A vaudeville routine is a licence to kill. W. C. Fields turned a drunk's antipathy into a wisecrack. Even inside the sentimentality of Chaplin there is a streak of cruelty trying to get out. They all get away with it via a loophole in the law voiced in *Twelfth Night*: 'There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail.' On the contrary, as Alexei Sayle (heir to this tradition) knows: there is really much malice aforethought.

Sayle is the first comedian for several generations who refuses to be mollified for television or the popular cinema. His genius needs to confect around itself a mood of conspiratorial glee. Hence his success in sweaty, select cabarets. **Train to Hell** doesn't convert its author's belligerence easily to print. We have the gags but miss the apoplectic ferocity of their delivery. The novel is merely a loose, picaresque tale, which permits much wandering from the point. Its main snook is cocked at intellectual travellers like Paul Theroux or Bruce Chatwin. 'All the really exciting trips had been done – by people who had much bigger advances from their publishers than myself.' Sayle has to settle for a Football Special from Liverpool to Rome.

The author pretends to be a scoop-reporter, interviewing eccentrics along the route. If he fails to meet any, he 'can always make a few up'. Indeed, travel writing has always been an uneasy mixture of autobiography, documentary and fiction. And the narrator here portrays himself not as an ingenuous recorder of the trip, but as 'this fat bastard who spent the whole time sitting on his bunk sneering and cruelly mocking people'. The style is wilfully undisciplined. One character, aggrieved to be written out early, threatens to expose the tale's twist. When Sayle gets bored, we are given a few cartoons in the manner of Baxter and Kliban. With a satirist's discernment, he has noticed that these popular pictorial humorists have, in fact, only one joke between the pair of them. Alexei Sayle is much more prodigal. His talent is such that he needs to invent a form which can contain him. I am not sure that a novel can quite cope.

The Wasp Factory is also a comic novel. But here the tone is that of the horror farce, rather than the recklessly madcap. Sayle pillories customs and conventions. Iain Banks has invented a world in which such niceties hardly exist to be regarded in the first place. We are on a private island off Scotland. A father and son live in a state of partial derangement. Frank, plumpish adolescent, roams the territory checking his Sacrifice Poles. These are grisly totems, adorned with the severed heads of animals, erected as an earnest to visitors of what to expect. Frank has also a reliquary in which he stores his prey and a chapel in the loft (the factory of the title) where his trophies are privately exhibited. Angus, the laird, is an eccentric embarrassment who fires bizarre questions at those he meets, usually about the dimensions of furniture and chattels in his house. An erstwhile drop-out don, he has a secret laboratory upstairs which nobody has ever entered.

The novel opens with the news that Eric, the most insane of the Cauldhames, has escaped from an asylum. Throughout the book he is getting closer to the island. Frank (who narrates) gives us a tour of this domain and outlines the family history. It is all a chronicle of delighted sadism, of mean wickedness. Frank, like his father, is an experimenter. He toys with life itself. He dynamites burrows and lobs petrol bombs at emerging rabbits. But he does not stop at wildlife. Frank boasts that he killed a crippled cousin by putting an adder inside his artificial leg. He next disposed of his younger brother Paul by enticing him to leap on a beached mine in the belief that it was a bell. Another relation, Esmerelda, is borne aloft by a giant kite. Frank fondly imagines that she died of starvation and dehydration till she became nothing but 'a tiny skeleton riding the jet-streams of the planet'.

Eric was incarcerated for stuffing maggots down children's gullets. We learn later that he was unhinged by an emetic experience involving blow-flies and a baby's brain at medical school. Frank, however, is nasty on purpose. A clue to his character comes when his father gives him a copy of *The Tin Drum*. This Günter Grass novel is about a modern Peter Pan. Frank is young and heartless, if not innocent, and cannot grow up. Cold, wet and exhilarated, he remembers that 'I wondered what it felt like to die'. Compare this with Peter's taunts against his own mortality. 'I can't remember my mother, because if I did I'd hate her.' Peter, too, has an ambivalent attitude towards his maternal provenance. But most significant is the island itself. The exciting, but dangerous, playground in the Victorian play is now a satellite from a Freudian hell.

In *The Wasp Factory*, beneath the ghoulish bestiary it describes, is an attempt to lard the yarn with metaphysics. Given the chance to snoop around the locked study, Frank discovers the secret of his own identity. Frank's father never registered him, there are no certificates 'to say I'm alive or have ever existed'. So what is the terrible secret of this chamber? Frank learns that he has exacted 'a toll from my peers who each would otherwise have grown into the one thing I could never become: an adult'. This is a brilliant book, barmy and barnacled with the grotesque. □

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The Rich Mrs Robinson
WINIFRED BEECHEY *Oxford* £6.95

Winifred Beechey's family chronicle began, say the blurb writers, 'as a sort of parlour game to amuse her parents'. Its claim on the attention of a wider public is in the artful simplicity of the narrative, the childlike, innocent eye of her sharp observations and the unobtrusive wit which plucks it safely out of the reach of whimsy.

The book begins with a description of life with her sister and 'our mother' in a tiny, austere cottage among cornfields and 'seas of stinging nettles' in the Vale of Aylesbury during the Great War. Social historians will not find this such a gold mine as *Lark Rise to Candleford* but there is a similar recollection of a lost world of rural custom. Poverty was always around the corner but it was never to be the squalid urban kind described by the visiting Lady Bountiful drumming up donations for Dr Barnardo's. The children knew that somehow poverty wasn't their proper inheritance and dreamed as their mother did of something better.

When 'our father' returned from the Front the family took a draper's shop in nearby Princes Risborough which the author's mother kept with a combination of careful industry and profligate yielding to the sales talk of travellers whose offloaded boxes of stock earned her the exasperated sobriquet 'the rich Mrs Robinson' from her husband. It was his invention of a sprung day bed for the chair factory where he worked that was later to raise the family income.

As perhaps befits the ludic protocols of the parlour game the minor comic incidents tend to prevail over any in-depth characterisation. Mr and Mrs Robinson are curiously shadowy presences and what linger in the mind are the scrapes and comic excursions.

There is a moving coda, where the aged Mr and Mrs Robinson are shown in their retirement returning atavistically to that early frugality, the father tapping into two pieces his post-prandial Fox's Glacier Mint with the back of the carving knife to make it last two days. Winifred Beechey's book deserves a place on the shelf alongside Flora Thompson and Molly Hughes as a deftly told tale of early 20th-century English life.

Nicholas Murray

The Politics of Local Spending
ARTHUR MIDWINTER *Mainstream* £12.50

Few people realise that the battles now being fought in England and Wales over the Conservative Government's plans to control local government spending ('rate-capping') have, in part, already been fought and lost in Scotland. Over the last three years the Scottish Secretary George Younger has taken and used increasingly authoritarian powers to influence the rates and spending on services of individual Labour-controlled councils – including Lothian, Stirling, Dundee and Glasgow. These attacks were deliberately used as a dry run for similar measures later adopted south of the border.

Arthur Midwinter, a lecturer in administration at Strathclyde University and a well-known expert on Scottish local government, has done a good job of demolishing some of the key assumptions underlying the Government's actions. With careful empirical analysis he shows that the reason for the recent rates explosion is not some 'caucus of militant marxists' deciding to spend wildly, but the combined impact of cuts in Government grant and inflation. Similarily, local government expenditure, rather than being 'out of control', was in fact well under control by 1979 and it has fallen by 2 per cent since then. The idea that Younger's new powers have had a dramatic impact in cutting local authorities' spending is also knocked severely on the head. Midwinter points out that Younger's cuts accounted for just 2.6 per cent of all rateborne expenditure in 1981-82, declining to a meagre 1.3 per cent this year.

His conclusions, when you get to them, are forthright. The basis on which Younger selected councils for cutbacks is said to be 'arbitrary and inconsistent'; the Government's justifications are 'wildly inaccurate' and 'spurious'; and the whole process was 'both unnecessary and ineffective'. The problem is that many may have difficulty in reaching them. Readers have to wade through much jargon (resources element, relevant expenditure, multiple regression analysis, etc) and a style that is a trifle too academic and assumes rather too much. That said, however, this is a valuable and timely contribution to a vitally important debate.

Rob Edwards

Nuclear Disengagement in Europe
ed. SVERRE LODGAARD and MAREK THEE
SIPRI/Taylor and Francis £17

Voices from Prague
ed. JAN KAVAN and ZDENA TOMIN
END/Palach Press £1.50

The Sword and the Ploughshare: Autonomous Peace Initiatives in East Germany
JOHN SANDFORD *END/Merlin Press* £1.95

One motive for NATO's 1979 decision to deploy cruise and Pershing II missiles was, ironically, to reinforce the alliance's cohesion. If the disarmament movements have failed to prevent deployment, they have nonetheless transformed the context in which politicians make nuclear decisions. NATO, less cohesive than ever, is unlikely to emerge from its present disarray until it can develop strategies which lessen rather than aggravate the fears of Europeans. In particular, reliance on early use of nuclear weapons, never militarily sensible, is becoming politically untenable.

Nuclear Disengagement in Europe, which translates into diplomatic terms some of the peace movement's demands, brings together proposals for establishing regional nuclear free zones (the main focus is on the Nordic area), which might raise the nuclear threshhold and help build political confidence. A brutally frank American contribution ('US military intervention has been required to preserve the balance . . . The North Atlantic has become America's English Channel'), and a Polish special plea on behalf of the USSR – there is no piece from Russia itself – show that even these modest proposals would have to brave cold war frosts. But European leaders, or those of them who are prepared to look, will find here some suggestions for a new security policy.

Meanwhile, the popular movements struggle to maintain their own East-West dialogue, a precarious but stubborn 'detente from below'. As *Voices from Prague* illustrates, responses from the East have grown more complex and more welcoming since E. P. Thompson's difficult exchanges with Václav Racek (reprinted here from the *NS*). To summarise the diverse views of the Czech chartists represented here would be to travesty them: those interested in the connections between peace, disarmament and civil liberties must read the pamphlet for themselves (it's available from END, 227 Seven Sisters Road, N4). Also from END, and also indispensable, is John Sandford's inspiring account of autonomous peace activity in East Germany. The GDR is a self-proclaimed 'Peace State': in reply to church-backed calls for non-military alternatives to conscription, the Secretary of State for Church Affairs has explained that 'military strength is the greatest contribution to peace'. Such rhetoric has a familiar ring.

Western ears will catch familiar echoes, too, in the language of the opposition, with its religious, feminist and ecological themes. As well as giving essential background, Sandford's pamphlet provokes reflection on the truth of the Czech Jaroslav Sabata's observation that 'the most important theatre of the peace struggle is the peace movement itself, in its widest sense'. A continental perspective, transcending but not ignoring the superpower blocs, is more than ever vital.

M. H. Ryle

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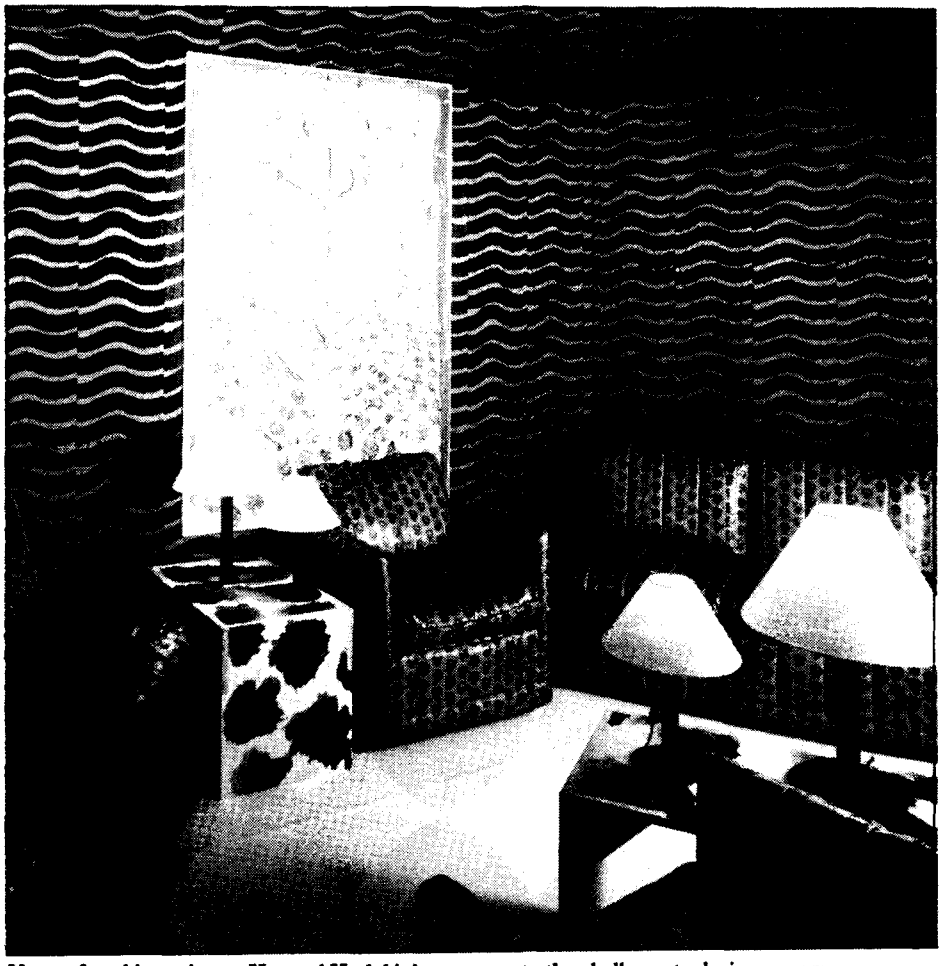
ARTS
John Spurling

Rooms at the top



Uncomfortable cosiness: Howard Hodgkin's response to the challenge to design a room

Four Rooms
Liberty, London, until March 10, then Wolverhampton, Southampton, Newport, Aberdeen, Sheffield
Vaughan Grylls: Britain Today
Atlantis Gallery, 105 Wapping Lane, London, E1

If the Arts Council's man Michael Regan had consulted me about commissioning four artists each to design a room to be shown on the top floor of Liberty's, I should have been unenthusiastic. It sounds gimmicky, trivialising, a waste of everybody's time and money. As it turns out, all four artists have taken the idea very seriously and created a particularly engaging and memorable exhibition. None, in fact, has made an environment that you would want to be in or could be in for long without discomfort. The rooms are as much imaginary spaces as paintings or sculptures are.

You are not permitted to enter Marc Camille Chaimowicz's room at all. It is a cold, hard-edged, mainly grey place, with certain deliberate perspective distortions, and an air of anonymous, international luxury, a cross between a holiday flat with an enormous rent and the set for a French or Italian movie. Nebulous scenes from some such movie are indeed being projected on a large square screen on one wall. But the room is also a tribute – or insult perhaps, since its untouched and untouchable combination of elegance and functionality is distinctly off-putting – to the Bauhaus tradition: there is a chair by Aalto and a rug and tube lamp by Eileen Gray.

Richard Hamilton's room, on the other hand, is fully open to all, but overtly uninviting. It contains a stainless steel washbasin, a central screen with an electronic panel beneath an observation window and, beyond the window, a hospital couch and blanket whose imaginary user would find him/herself staring straight up into a hanging TV set. On the screen appears Mrs Thatcher, highly animated and in colour, but mercifully soundless, explaining, one assumes, why it has unfortunately proved necessary to remove your leg, your arm, your vital organs, your grant and your job. A simple room, but purposeful.

Anthony Caro's 'Child's Tower Room' is strictly for the kiddies, though a slim, agile adult such as your reviewer can just slide up the spiral stairs into the tiny cabin inside. The whole is made of Japanese oak and constructed for Caro by the furniture-maker Guy Martin. From outside it looks a little like a squat Mary Abbott version of Tatlin's tower for the Russian Revolution; from inside, with its sloping floor and tubular windows, it feels like a space capsule. Really it's less a room than a sculpture, a development from Caro's recent hollow steel pieces, made from old buoys and other marine leftovers, suggesting caves, drums or wombs; but it's also a measure of how successful the original idea for the exhibition has been. The commission has stretched the sculptor into making something which will surely in turn stretch the public towards understanding his exhilarating mastery over interior space.

The Howard Hodgkin room is for sitting in: an octagonal tent, walled and ceilinged in a wavy, zebra-striped fabric, with tall window-like floral panels at either side, sofas and armchairs in blue-blotched glazed chintz, hand-painted occasional tables and a series of demure table-lamps of varying sizes. If it reminds you of Roger Fry's Omega Workshop – especially in view of the current Omega exhibitions at the Crafts Council and Anthony d'Offay galleries – then it also reminds you that Hodgkin is Bloomsbury's most obvious successor. Yet for all it looks a comfortable room and, in a simple sense, is, there is discomfort in its very cosiness and togetherness. The light from the lamps dims and brightens intermittently, there are entrances on opposite sides, making it actually a passageway, the bold patterns and lack of personal objects spell claustrophobia and anonymity. It could be an anteroom in a restaurant or superior brothel, a set for *Huis Clos* or a room in a painting in which the occupants, too, dissolve into semi-abstract elements of the decor. The trap to this room is the very fact that it invites you to sit down and make yourself at home: its equivocality rubs off on you, its dubious identity swallows yours. Hodgkin has always been a pleasing, sweet-toothed painter. With this room he achieves a dimension of irony and disturbance he has not approached before and I suspect it may have a lasting effect on his work.

COLLAGE OR 'joiner' photography is an interesting method (derived from Cubism) of giving a sense of space, time and movement to what otherwise tends to look flat and embalmed. Its best known practitioner is David Hockney (whose exhibition of photographs has just closed at the Hayward), though Vaughan Grylls has been at it for longer. Hockney's genius for composition makes his work more immediately appealing, but his content is characteristically superficial – an ad-man's view of the world. Grylls is heavier on both counts: he plods rather too squarely over his space, but he takes on much more ambitious subjects, setting an England/Scotland football crowd at Wembley against the idea of nuclear war in the UK; or the Greenwich meridian against the notion of Britain posed between East and West, between past glories and present uncertainty.

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His best piece in this exhibition is perhaps the most nearly Hockneyan in composition, *Bank Holiday Monday*, in which a group of spectators in wheel-chairs at the bottom of the picture contemplates a re-enactment of the Battle of Naseby by the Sealed Knot Society, all got up as Cavaliers and Roundheads. The pageantry, the sunny summer day, the energetic, multitudinous activity of the participants, even including a group of girls in peasant costume tending the wounded in the foreground, are fresh and immediate, with a real sense of trotting horses and heaving *melées*; but the underlying message is cogent and inescapable: we still prefer to live in the past, we have still not settled the issue between Cavaliers and Roundheads, we still glorify war. □

THEATRE
Rosalind Carne

Scenes from a literary life

Tom and Viv
MICHAEL HASTINGS *Royal Court*
Rents
MICHAEL WILCOX *Lyric, Hammersmith*
Man Friday
ADRIAN MITCHELL *Half Moon*

Muck-raking is a favourite pastime of the British intelligentsia, and what could be more enticing than a foray into the sordid private life of our foremost 20th-century poet? T. S. Eliot met and married his first wife, Vivienne, in 1915. He left her in 1933 and, in 1935, connived with her family to have her committed to an asylum. She remained there until she died and Eliot never visited her.

This much is well-documented, but Michael Hastings strays boldly into the realm of fiction in his imagined reconstruction of some of the details of Vivienne's purported madness. And, while there is nothing in the play that could not have happened in reality, I was left with a sense of uneasiness as to the author's motives.

The play is not wholly successful as a piece of theatre, either, largely because it straddles two camps. Spanning 32 years from the couple's meeting to Vivienne's death, the short scenes create a feeling of distance from the action, at the same time admirably conveying the passage of years. The play also digs at the crumbling foundations of the relationship, bordering on tragedy as it reveals the incompatibility of genius and a love which demands as much, if not more, than it gives. This is certainly the most interesting aspect of the piece, prompting me to wonder why Hastings didn't risk himself still further, dispense with most of the historical trappings and concentrate wholly on the play's intimate heart.

Designers Anthony McDonald and Jock Scott use transparent panels and a painted backdrop of a country house, thereby sharpening the impression that what we are witnessing is part of literary legend. But intense, full-blooded performances from Tom Wilkinson and Julie Covington ensure that our emotions are fully engaged.

Wilkinson makes a brilliant transition from the introverted awkwardness of the young American, desperate for acceptance within the English establishment, to the successful man of letters, Anglicised, quietly confident, but wracked firstly by the embarrassment of an unpredictable, refractory wife, and secondly by guilt at his method of disposing of her. The part is cleverly under written, giving the actor plenty of scope to portray the fervid intelligence and imagination that seethe behind the silence.

He is well-matched by Julie Covington's superb, deeply vulnerable Viv, whose wild eccentricity is a wholly credible defence against a hostile world. Margaret Tyzack plays her mother, hinting beautifully and subtly at confused maternal sentiments behind a shell of upper-class respectability. And David Haig is her brother Maurice, the man (now dead) to whom Hastings is indebted for much of his source material. Here, I feel that director Max Stafford-Clark has misjudged, in allowing a performance that verges on caricature. Maurice may have been a boring twit, but this is no reason to sacrifice the audience's interest and empathy.

It's not easy to come to a verdict about **Tom and Viv** because it excites and disappoints in fairly equal proportions. For all its faults, it is an ambitious and intriguing experiment.

For a less ambitious but in many respects more successful piece of modern drama, I recommend William Gaskill's revival of **Rents**, a slice-of-life account of love, lust and sheer opportunism among homosexual rent boys in contemporary Edinburgh. Originally a studio production, the play looks a little lost on the main stage, but designer Dermot Hayes gives a touch of magic to the shabby interior set by silhouetting the backdrop with a splendid city skyline.

As in *Tom and Viv*, the style is staccato, episodic, but in this case the form mirrors the fragmented nature of the characters' lives, with their successions of fleeting sexual encounters.

Stevan Rimkus is Phil, the prima donna of the cruising circuit, wickedly flirtatious, cajoling and dangerous, but fiercely demanding of loyalty and affection from his 18-year-old live-in lover, Robert, endearingly portrayed by Douglas Sannachan. At the apex of the triangle is Richard (Paul Jesson), the shy academic on sabbatical from Newcastle who wears his vulnerability like a badge.

It is not a play to change your life, but it is very informative on male gay etiquette, the rules of cottaging and casual pick-ups. Its greatest claim to attention is that, through a lively script and rich performances, it creates a wholly absorbing world on stage.

Finally, at the Half Moon, Phil Young has mounted a colourful revival of Adrian Mitchell's inversion of the Robinson Crusoe story. His designer is Cath Fitzgerald and she has brought in sandbags and a great deal of blue paint to transform the auditorium into as near a semblance to a desert island as you are likely to find within spitting distance of Stepney Green tube. Christopher Asante is a joyful, winning Friday, but I had reservations about Jonathan Hackett's Crusoe. Once again the British upper-class figure becomes an object of caricature, when a realistic portrait would surely be more chilling. Of course this is to some extent a true reading of Mitchell's text. He presents a politically justifiable tableau rather than an equally weighted dramatic conflict and it must be hard not to make fun of a character with lines like, 'If I kill you I'm only doing it for your own good.'

The best thing about the production is the way it involves the audience without strain, arousing our sympathy and indignation by turns as we witness a two-man resurrection of the history of colonialism. The comedy is well-aimed and the action is enlivened by buoyant physicality and some splendid songs and dancing from members of Friday's tribe who surge in through the audience at frequent intervals. □

Among this week's contributors:

JUSTIN WINTLE is the editor of *The Makers of Modern Culture* and *The Makers of 19th-Century Culture*. His first novel *Paradise for Hire*, set in the Far East, is to be published by Secker in April.

ALAN BOLD's edition of Hugh McDiarmid's *Aesthetics in Scotland* (Mainstream) is published this month, as in his McDiarmid miscellany, *The Thistle Rises* (Hamish Hamilton). He is co-author, with Robert Giddings, of *True Characters: Real People in Fiction*, to be published by Longman in April.

PATRICIA CRAIG is the co-author, with Mary Cadogan, of *You're a Brick, Angela* and *Women and Children First*.

ROGER LEWIS is working on an introduction to the work of Anthony Burgess for the Methuen Contemporary Writers series.

M. H. RYLE is the author of *The Politics of Nuclear Disarmament* (Pluto Press).

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FILMS
John Coleman

Low gloss

Star 80 (18)
Classic, Haymarket; Gate, Bloomsbury; ABC, Fulham Road
Strange Invaders (PG)
Studio, Oxford Circus
Curse of the Pink Panther (PG)
Plaza

Dorothy Stratten was a good-looking Vancouver teenager on whom a pimping petty hustler, Paul Snider, battened. Seeing her potential, he helped promote her to the dubious distinction of a staple through the navel as *Playboy* nude of the month. He persuaded her to marry him, against guru Hefner's advice; watched her career as starlet take off, until Peter Bogdanovich not only gave Dorothy her biggest chance in his frolicsome *They All Laughed* (still without theatrical release over here) but started an affair with her; in 1980, this wretched Snider bloodily took a shotgun to the 20-year-old girl before turning it on himself. The sordid little tabloid tale was subsequently written up in the *Village Voice* by one Teresa Carpenter to such effect that she picked up a Pulitzer Prize. A sleazy TV movie, *Death of a Centrefold*, followed in 1981. 'Nuff said, one might have thought: another country, the wench is dead . . .

But no: Bob Fosse (rhymes with 'flossy') has chosen in his unwisdom to give these monitory doings the business – or, more accurately, as **Star 80** turns out, the show business. Writing and directing the piece, he has not only mixed fact and fiction bewilderingly, so that Dorothy (Mariel Hemingway), her would-be Svengali Paul (Eric Roberts) and Hugh Hefner (Cliff Robertson in pyjamas) co-inhabit the screen with an invented lover-director Aram (our own Roger Rees, invited to be wincingly sensitive). Confusion is further compounded by the sort of choppy introduction of fake-interview material – and flashes backward and forward – that, among other things, marred Fosse's biopic *Lenny*. Thus we have heavy intimations of what's ahead at the very outset, with Ms Hemingway's girly voice gushing over to the press while Mr Roberts is shown highly distraught and blood-flecked, before a shift back to Vancouver, '58, and Snider's fateful pick-up of high-school Stratten waitressing in a hamburger caff. As presumptive dramatic irony this is clumping stuff, somehow made all the cruder by the expert Sven Nykvist's glossy photography. The visual values throughout are to approximate those of *Playboy* magazine.

And this could, of course, be interpreted as another kind of irony, with crafty Fosse intent on sending up the values of that meretricious phenomenon in its own style. There are hints of this, in fact. Robertson's Hefner looks distinctly uncomfy when creepy Paul accosts him at his fab mansion, quoting admiring chunks of his 'philosophy'. When Hefner earlier declares, 'The whole magazine is like having a family', a reporter sardonically echoes his words, having been there before. But the overall emphasis lies elsewhere. When Hemingway's Dorothy breathlessly unbosoms herself in this fashion – 'Oh, Paul, he's wonderful . . . like a father, or someone' – one is left uncertain as to where to put oneself, into whose shoes. And the to-camera comments of the erstwhile house-mate of Paul and Dorothy, a smug plastic surgeon, are surely ambiguous to a fault, if not downright unwise: 'Frankly, I thought it was a little like a soap opera, and I clearly misread it.' Did he?

For, whatever its pretensions may be, the film presents Snider, in Roberts's moist-lipped and spivvish performance, as such an unrelieved schmuck that there is no breathing-space for human sympathy. As this crawler is displayed, mysteriously hung out of a window by hoods and sicking over his suit, later embarrassing the hell out of Dorothy at the *Playboy* playhouse by his social gaucherie and sartorial gaudiness, we are positively encouraged to *share* in that embarrassment and hence endorse the laid-back cool and sophistication of the appalling Hefner dream-world. At which point some of us cease to give a damn and fall rather to ignoble speculations about why Mariel Hemingway, so enchanting in Woody Allen's *Manhattan*, so persuasive in *Personal Best*, went to the surgical bother of increasing her chest measurement to secure such a misty-eyed, lipsticked nothing of a part.

Michael Laughlin's **Strange Invaders** has every appearance of having been made on a shoe-string but that is conceivably one of its merits: the cheap, strip-cartoon look of it, with big apartments furnished out of someone's bargain basement and a space ship resembling a large harmonica. From this joke-craft (supplied by the understandably named Private Stock Effects, Inc.) emerges an equally risible flying saucer. The place and time are Centerville, Illinois, 1958; and a screened title nudge-nudges the show on the road: 'Except for the communists and rock-and-roll, there was not much to fear at all . . . until that night.' Something dreadful happens to a bubble-gum-blowing lass and the lad she has been necking with as they return to their separate homes. Cut to 25 years on in New York and an entomology prof, unduly relaxed Paul LeMat, whose divorced wife suddenly dumps their young daughter on him and takes off for that Centerville, there to disappear. Mr LeMat loses his pooch on an initial, exploratory trip there, back home finds himself pursued by four aliens whose trick of de-facing themselves gummily reveals something post-*E.T.* special in alienation effects, and is soon in a high-level tangle involving super Louise Fletcher as an irritable government person and Nancy Allen as a daredevil girl reporter. The outcome is up-beat, I think, perhaps best described as a lot of glowing balls. I also suspect this fuzzy occasion of aspiring to cult-status; the sense is of a tongue rather desperately probing for a cheek.

Blake Edwards has a corner in Inspector Clouseau movies, out of which one trusted he had directed himself with the scrap-heap *Trail of the Pink Panther*, a sad epitaph to the genius of Peter Sellers. No such luck: his egregiously awful **Curse of the Pink Panther** has just emerged, with no Sellers but fairly thronged with ghosts (David Niven, for one, flits wanly through as Sir Charles again). The crude slapstick centres round Ted Wass (from TV's *Soap*) as the dumbest cop in New York, summoned by Herbert Lom's Dreyfus *not*, as it were, to find the missing Clouseau. Horn-rimmed Wass falls about like a travelogue Harold Lloyd, another impertinence. P.S. For some five minutes a 'special guest star', billed as Turk Thrust II, *is* remarkably funny. □

TELEVISION
Hugo Williams

Hons & Dons

THE UPPER-CLASS chronicles continue to roll in, establishing a kind of tradition – leisurely, loving, detailed and highly verbal. They are invariably set between the wars, like a potentially dangerous dog who isn't allowed out. They are very different from the brilliant, jagged leaps of the working-class format (*Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* ITV), which seems to suggest it has little time for dilly-dallying on television. I suppose the polarisation of styles reflects the one going on all round us. I look forward to a cross-over.

The film of *Another Country* – about Guy Burgess's time at Eton – is shortly due for release. Julian Mitchell, who adapted it from his own stage play, has also adapted two novels by Rosamund Lehmann for a two-hour mini-series-in-one called **The Weather in the Streets** (BBC-2). The former is a flashy compromise: buggery, thuggery and snobbery to the fore like a cardboard top-hat. The latter succeeds due to its ironic fidelity to the values of its subject.

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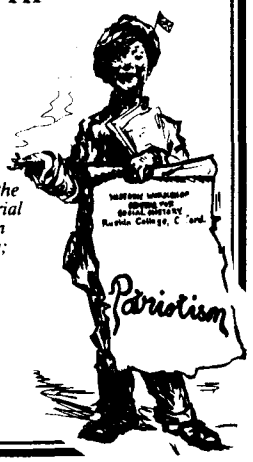

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In *The Weather in the Streets*, Michael York and Lisa Eichhorn are acquaintances, from their first giddy season in the '20s, who meet on a train ten years later – the railways are given a ghostly afterlife in this genre – and start an affair. He is unhappily married and rich; she happily separated but poor. 'Might I ring up? Would it be a bore?' He can't remember her name, our first ill omen. 'Olivia Curtis. I'm still that. I have been something else, but I've gone back to that.' Already we hear her more sensitive diction. We see the two of them dancing like moths round the flame of a yellow lampshade, as they talk about running away together. The acting so matches the writing that we barely notice the shift in the balance of attraction from the dashing 'Rollo' with his oxblood Rolls to the mousey Olivia with her bedsitter and level gaze.

When she tells him about her abortion, he says, 'Oh darling, what a *shame*. What bad *luck*,' always managing to muffle the barefaced honesty of his script in his own chronic charm. By the film's end even York's hair is looking weak. The story has a sort of happy ending as Olivia realises she has done the right thing getting rid of her child by this reed of a man.

'My father did absolutely nothing,' said **Don Luis Buñuel** (BBC-2), the oldest of seven children 'who was worshipped by his mother like a saint'. 'After his ablutions, he read the paper. Then he would go to see if his cigars had arrived. Out walking he would only ever carry a box of caviar. After a siesta, he changed his clothes and went to his club.' Buñuel's life could hardly have been more different, but he was less democratic than he pretended. Catherine Deneuve: 'He was very conservative about women. I wouldn't say he was very tender with them. He wanted me to wear padding . . .' He seemed happiest 'perched on a barstool like Simon Stylites'. He advised, 'To provoke a reverie in a bar you have to drink dry martinis, in which the Noilly Prat exists in relation to the gin much as the Holy Ghost, like a sunbeam passing through a stained glass window, pierces the hymen of the Virgin Mary . . .'

As he talked, Buñuel's left eye started to look as though it had been the one used in the opening shot of *Un Chien Andalou*. 'The first film I ever saw was some kind of pink pig.' We understood this to have been a woman, probably his mother. 'You saw a person in medium shot. She came at you in close-up. It was frightening.' An assistant on *L'Age d'or* said humbly, 'To put a cow in a bed is not a *very* easy thing.' Or a very subtle one, given Buñuel's use of women as sexual and religious symbols. It was clear that Buñuel saw himself as the Don of this crackpot iconography of ants and cows and razor blades, just as his father had been of his cigars and caviar. 'I love animals,' he said. 'I don't much like the blind. I can't help wondering if Mortadella is made by blind men.' (Close-up of a sausage showing cross-sections of finger-bones lost to the grinder.)

All hell broke loose on **Did You See** (BBC-2) this week, when Ludo unleashed the hounds of English philistinism on poor old Buñuel's crazy Catholic fancy. These experts didn't like his imagery at all. They could hardly speak. 'The horridness of it all was revolting,' said romantic novelist Molly Kaye in a sort of vapour. 'It made me want to be sick.' Eric Laithwaite was likewise outraged by this continental blasphemy. 'It was the worst television I've ever seen,' he said. 'And coming at a time when we're trying to throw out video nasties.' Colin MacCabe, director of the John Logie Baird Centre For Research Into Television, dusted off the gloves, but sensing a weight of professional frustration howling for blood was permitted to withdraw.

Not surprisingly, Ms Kaye, author of the much-pilloried *Far Pavilions*, couldn't find it in her heart to like the much-praised *Jewel in the Crown* series, giving as her reasons the fact that she didn't think Paul Scott, whom she had known personally, would have liked it, had he been alive to see it, since there were things in the book that had been left out of the series, and she couldn't understand anyone fancying Ronald Merrick.

The man from Logie Baird piped up again and said blamelessly: 'Why don't we see drama with the same energy about racism in England today?' It was impossible to argue with his sentiment, but there were people present who were dying to. □

DANCE
Stephanie Jordan

Personality acts

Extemporary Dance Theatre
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Unsettling, yet instinctively theatrical and unique in its reconciliation of audience tastes with choreographic experiment, Extemporary Dance Theatre has become one of our most entertaining dance companies. You don't enjoy these six dancers as you might enjoy most others. None of them is super-technician, nor particularly elegant, nor possessed of beautiful line. Instead, the most watchable among them are raw, eccentric, singular in build and general appearance and charmingly uninhibited. EDT has introduced to modern dance the talent for character and wit that has been for years part of our ballet tradition, also a rhythmic precision and speed. The dancers are brave enough and the group corporate enough to seek out the danger point in complex interaction. Most choreographers have exploited their special potential; performance strength probably outweighs the total choreographic enterprise, but creative personalities such as these can raise their material to the level of excellent theatre.

Director Emilyn Claid is attracted to the alert, fresh quality in small Annelies Stoffel, a childlike inquisitiveness and energy. In **Child's Eyes,** she explores a fantasy nursery of lifelike toys, some more friendly to her than others, in bizarre costumes and make-up, padded and wired *à la* Bauhaus by Craig Givens. Edgar Newman is a curious, affectionate creature in Kermit-green; Avigail Ben Ari dispassionately exotic, sprouting wire stamens; Lloyd Newson a red devil who becomes the child's playground adversary in a simulated chase. Ultimately, as in a dream, they are insubstantial. Corrine Bougaard, swathed more conventionally, soft and silky in manner, provides motherly warmth, but she too fades away, leaving Stoffel once again in her shaft of light. This is a piece that draws attention to the moment, to the minutiae of an idiosyncratic gestural language, a disquieting magic: the hypnotic finger-wag, the rippling arm, mobile shoulder and neck. The structure is simple, the content fragile, but the details are absorbing; likewise Sylvia Hallett's score, a mixture of tape, sound effects, excursions into and out of Chopin and live music.

Agatha Christie is the source of Stuart Hopps' **Death Herb,** but being more essence of Christie novel than portrayal of any one, the work turns out like a game of Cluedo. Set in the grounds of Sir Ambrose Bercy's Clodderham Court during the Twenties, to an atmospheric sound track by Chris Benstead, we have familial intrigue and suspicion: the Guardian with phial in pocket, the Butler brandishing a necktie strangulatorily or handing the Ward the sinister secateurs, the Best Friend not entirely innocently associated with the Ward's revolver-toting Fiancé, or a fishbone projected meaningfully on the backcloth – will it stick in somebody's gullet? The summer afternoon ends with cucumber sandwiches and a strychnine dance in which the poisonous Ward feigns death. The entry of a Miss Marple (uncredited in the programme) signals a telescoped rerun of the whole thing.

The skilful whodunit should overcome the whocares. *Murder on the Orient Express* or *Death on the Nile* are successful because the author provides sympathetic humans rather than boardgame counters. Hopps chooses to remove the character integument and expose the whodunnit technology. It is more pat than clever, more skit than comedy-thriller. The characters, all very well played, can only posture, tackling fragments of dance here and there. Most audiences won't have a chance to fathom out this piece from a single viewing, so baffling is its succession of events.

In EDT's third programme, **Death Herb** was followed by **Naples,** which is not quite a masterpiece either, although Fergus Early's coarse comedy and sustained dance sequences have justified much hilarity at the Place and elsewhere. Other repertoire, too, continues to extract better things from the company: David Gordon's **Counter Revolution** – its number madness looking more daredevil than ever; Michael Clark's **1 2 X U,** the most technically demanding and abstract, uses only Newson and Yaakov Slivikin in a dense, dismembered, insolent animation of punk sensibility; and then **Spiked Sonata** (Dan Wagoner), like **Naples,** provides ensemble mischief at full throttle. □

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FIRST PERSON

Anne Smith

About face

I LAUGHED myself silly a couple of weeks ago at the sight of Mrs Thatcher laying a wreath in Budapest. It was her Armistice Day expression – lugubrious piety or fanatical reverence, I can't quite decide which – that slew me. If I had written the script, I'd have put in a voice-over of Kenny Everett's howl to the faithful last election campaign, 'Kill the Commies!', letting it reverberate around the respectful silence.

Thinking in the visual medium made one thing lead to another and, before I knew it, I had a clear image of Our Leader as a cardboard cut-out doll, the kind that is sold to impressionable little girls whose parents can't afford 'Barbie' or 'Cindy'. It is to the Barbie-doll subculture that the Victor of the Falklands belongs: everything standardised, sanitised and glamorised. Every character in every American show that comes to our TV screens is like that nowadays. It's revolting.

There's a scene in Julia O'Faolain's *No Country for Young Men* (Penguin, 1980) in which an American dentist is taken to a Dublin pub on the evening of his maiden voyage to the oul' country. First, he notices the teeth of the assembled imbibers and is horrified to find that the Irish appear to believe that 'orthodontic' is some sort of contraceptive. Then, he inspects the faces, marking a set of wild eyebrows here, a broken nose dere and, begorrah, all the correctable irregularities that the flesh is heir to. He is shocked. Although Julia O'Faolain doesn't exactly say so, the fact is he feels like Gulliver among the Yahoos.

Being an unregenerate Scot (what John Knox would have said about plastic surgery, not only God knows, believe me), when I was in Dublin last summer I saw nothing wrong with the native features at all, at all. On the other hand, I'm sure if I went to Dallas or LA I'd feel as if I were in a John Wyndham novel – *The Midwich Cuckoos* is the one that comes to mind. Maybe I'm perverse, but I *like* squint teeth, bushy eyebrows, ears that stick out and wrinkles (preferably not all at once, but the preference is only mild). It comforts me to know that we're not all the same.

But I've left Mrs Thatcher's parts in outline on the cardboard, waiting to be coloured in, assembled and dressed. It recently struck me, you see, that over the years of her reign I have learned from diverse sources that a) she dyes her hair; b) she's had her voice doctored (hormones or elocution, I can't remember which); c) some aristocratic *bonne viveuse* chooses her wardrobe; d) she's spent thousands of pounds on dental work (sharpening her fangs, perhaps?) and e), courtesy of Anna Coote, that she has acquired balls. I won't go into the operations which purported to be for piles and tunnel vision – they were private, anyway – but have you seen *Apocalypse Now* (Channel 4, praised be their name)?

Not so much born again, as reinvented for telly: the real, original Mrs Thatcher was a gangling ball-faced wifie, in a waisted coat and a Bourne & Hollingsworth hat, given to striding along like Joyce Grenfell and clutching a capacious handbag as if Dennis's wage packet were in it. I know, I've seen the pictures. I'm still trying to take it in though, the implication of this transformation.

But then, in passing, since we're on the subject of public appearances, just before Christmas Harold Wilson passed me in a limousine on his way to a film premiere in London. He looked jadedly out and I looked boredly back (I was trying to cross the road) – it was a moment for history – and, for a full ten seconds, I swear to you I thought I was face to face with Queen Victoria (her wi' the values). There, if ever I saw it, was a case for Doing Something about it. He should grow a moustache – but maybe the Old Queen had one of those too, who knows?

And, by the way, if you're looking for something to distract you from thoughts of the next Prime Ministerial tour, look up the back copy of the *New York Review of Books* in which Gore Vidal relates the saga of Nancy Reagan's nose in its many reincarnations. After all, as another Victorian said, 'People mutht be amuthed, thquire!' □

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2809 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

In order to avoid the legal prosecution with which a US restaurant has recently threatened its critics, can we have the review of a book, film, play, hotel, etc, which, while praising, damns? Max. 120 words. By 2 March.

No 2806 **Set by May Day**

Updated nursery rhymes.

Report **By Babe Bio**

Gosh, grown-ups can be boring. Mary and that muppet of a lamb turned up in at least to entries out of three (I counted). I've let a cupple through for the sake of ~~dim damocc~~ democracy, but all the ones about Parkinson, Bermingham and Jay went out of the window. Don't you lot ever think about *any thing* but sex? Theirs three quid for each of the winers – though personly I think Marie O'Briens the only one who knows anything.

Mary took some little lambs
Into the Common Market
French farmers stopped her lorry 'though
And told her where to park it.

ROGER E. BRYAN

Mary had a little lamb
She tried to sell the French,
Who shouted '*Non*' and other things
I hardly like to mench.

Hey-diddle-diddle,
A bloody great fiddle,
Mark was over the moon,
Mrs T laughed to see such sport,
And batted for Britain till noon.

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

Poor old Sir Geoffrey Howe,
He had ten thousand men,
He messed them up at Cheltenham,
Then put them down again.

If he was right, he went wrong,
And if he was wrong, he's too Right,
And even if only half-way wrong,
He should have expected a fight.

P. M. G. SHIEL

Ring-a-ring o' roses,
He's got asbestosis;
Deny it, deny it,
It's best kept dark.

O. BANFIELD

Little Polly Flinders sat among the cinders
After the H Bomb fell,
Her mother said 'My daughter, you mustn't mind the slaughter,
Russia's been destroyed as well.'

Cheltenham, Cheltenham wilt thou be mine?
Thou shalt not join unions with communist swine
But sit on a cushion and do as you're bid,
And you'll be Sir Geoffrey's
For one thousand quid.

GERRY HAMILL

The North wind doth blow,
And we shall have snow,
And what will the OAPs do,
Poor shits?

They'll get hypothermia,
Or something germier,
For they can't afford thermal knits,
Poor shits.

FIONA PITT-KETHLEY

Hee, haw,
Maggie's a bore,
Ronnie's a ruddy disaster:
So what shall we do in a nuclear war?
Nothing but damn him and blast her . . .

GINA BERKELEY

Little Ms Muffet
Sat on a tuffet
Reading a book by Ms Greer.
When she read: 'Girls! Don't do it!'
She couldn't construe it
And concluded: 'The Sixties end here.'

NICHOLAS MURRAY

Boys and Girls come out to play,
There's grass and snow if you can pay,
So cosh your Ma and garotte your Pa,
Do the meter and flog the car.

A ring, a ring o' glue tins
A pocketful of new sins,
Pernicious,
Delicious,
We'll all fall down.

MARIE O'BRIEN

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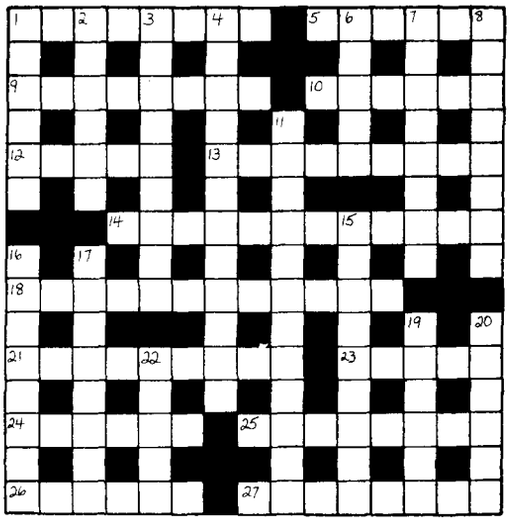
Weekend Crossword 1430

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1430, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 28 February.



ACROSS

1. Adult parties are spoilt by this nuisance (8)
5. Something lucky found in old woman's bed (6)
9. Distant traveller came crashing into bridge (8)
10. A place on the main road is one's proper sphere (6)
12. Praise for appearing in the next old-time Music Hall (5)
13. Something for the kitchen afterwards found in a bundle (9)
14. Players who are featured in a novelist's conceit? (8, 4)
18. Something on the air ticket which paralyses movement through the air? (6, 6)
21. Local people in tears about the team (9)
23. Female who loses her heart in a French town (5)
24. Riding is sore work (6)
25. Relaxed, leaving one's glove in the grass (8)
26. Subjects of autobiographies? (6)
27. Practised abstinence, but the man took a wife in the end (8)

DOWN

1. The male in an animal shows aggression (6)
2. Tailor let loose in merchant's place (6)
3. She will try to catch crabs, for example (9)
4. Exercise for a down-and-out with nothing to keep him warm? (12)
6. For spite married her (5)
7. Caught a capital twitch – it is to do with the weather (8)
8. Behaved obsequiously when after transport (8)
11. Teachers whose material is the silent morning star (5, 7)
15. The winger he caught turned out for a place on the Thames (9)
16. Terrify in a battle about the French leaders (8)
17. Insolence on greeting will keep the chaps away (8)
19. Lavish the finest on the town centre (6)
20. Closely united even if old age were forgotten (6)
22. Carver is finished outside the ring (5)

SETSQUARE

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APPOINTMENTS

IVS VACANCIES IN THIRD WORLD DEVELOPMENT

BOTSWANA: Nursery/Infant Teacher; Librarian; Food Technologist; Agricultural Co-ordinator; Water Engineers; Small-scale Mining and Processing Adviser; Technical Information Officer.
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LESOTHO: Water Engineer; Engineer for Labour Intensive Construction; **Printed Textiles Instructor.**

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Closing date: **3 March, 1984**

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Applications are invited for a post in the Transport & General Workers' Union's Research Department at their Central Office for a Research Assistant, specialising in corporate finance and industrial policy. In addition, the successful applicant will contribute to general policy briefing, and the servicing of TGWU Trade Groups.

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Written applications, including full c.v., are invited by 20 February, addressed to Mr R. Collins, Central Office Manager, TGWU, Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3JB.

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LISTINGS

SAT 18 FEBRUARY

LONDON Benefit for E. London Troops Out Movement. Live Irish music, floor singers, bar, food. Adm. £1.50/£1 unwaged. 8pm Hackney Trades Club, 96 Dalston La, E8. **Org: TOM, Box 13 136 Kingsland High St, E8.**

OXFORD 'Visual Documentation: The English Countryside'. One day workshop 10am-6pm at Ruskin College. Tickets £4/£2 unwaged. **Org. History Workshop Centre for Social History, 0865 56041/240294.**

LONDON Prison Picket to demand the right of repatriation for Irish PoWs in English jails — Brixton Prison, Jebb Ave, SW2, 1-3pm. **Org. S. London Irish Solidarity Comm. BM Box 4835 WC1N 3XX.**

MON 20 FEBRUARY

BATTERSEA 'Building CND in the Trades Unions & Civil Defence'. Spkr Jimmy Fitzpatrick of Fire Brigade Union. 7.30pm Junction Resource Centre, 248 Lavender Hill, SW11. **Org. Battersea CND.**

WED 23 FEBRUARY

BRADFORD 'The Abolition of Local Democracy' Spkr Ken Livingstone. 7.30pm Small Hall, Uni. of Bradford, Richmond Rd, Bradford 7.**Org. UBU Labour Club.**

HAMPSTEAD 'Direct Action — what is its role in the peace movement?' Spkr John Drane, Sec. London region CND. 7.30pm 'Pentameters', above Three Horseshoes pub, Heath St., Adm. free. **Org. Hampstead CND.**

THURS 23 FEBRUARY

RICHMOND 'Nuclear disarmament', Spkr Jo Richardson, 8pm Community Centre, Sheen Road. **Org. Richmond Labour Party. Details: Joy Mostyn, 01-602 2723/6.**

NATIONWIDE 'Stand up for Education' — National Day of Action in defence of further and higher education organised by NUS Supported by Union of Students in Ireland and other international student orgs. **Details: NUS 01-272 8900.**

LONDON 'The day after: what the experts say'. Public meeting on the effects of nuclear war. Spkrs Prof. Ian Percival (SANA), Dr. A. Potekiakhoff (Sec. Medical Campaign for prevention of War). 7.30pm Hendon Library, The Burroughs, NW4. **Org. Golders Green & Hendon CND. Details: 01-458 4369.**

LONDON 'Trade Union ban at Cheltenham — the threat to civil liberties'. Public meeting 7pm County Hall, SE1. Spkrs incl. Rodney Bickerstaffe, Alan Sapper, Larry Gostin. **Org. NCCL, 21 Tabard St, SE1. 01-403 3888.**

LONDON 1984 and Human Rights. Spkr Prof Theo van Boven, to 1982 Director UN Div. of Human Rights. Adm. free. 6pm Chatham House, 10 St. James Sq, SW1. **Org: MRG 01-930 6659.**

DUDLEY 'The Forward Face of Feminism' Public discn. with Tricia Davis of Communist Party. 7.30pm The Swan, Castle St.

SAT 25 FEBRUARY

LONDON 'Towards a Police State' — day event 2pm-11pm Chats Palace, 42 Brooksbys Walk, E9. Adm. £1 (day)/£1.50 (eve.), half price unemployed. **Details & tickets in advance: Hackney Campaign Against the Police Bill, 50 Rectory Rd, N16. 01-249 8334.**

MANCHESTER Anti-Trident Convention in Free Trade Hall. 11am-5pm. Spkrs, workshops, videos, displays. **Details: Anti-Trident Campaign, 420 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow G2. 041-332 3141.**

LONDON Meeting to Relaunch 'The Leveller', 2pm Room 2 ASTMS Head Office, 79 Camden Rd, NW1. **Details: 01-274 2288.**

LONDON Chile Solidarity AGM 10.30am-4.30pm Camden Town Hall, Euston Rd, NW1. Creche/-food. **Details: Helen Garner 01-272 4928.**

FORTHCOMING

27 FEB LONDON 'Has overseas development hurt women's rights' — Talk and discn with Barbara Rogers and other spkrs. 5.45pm ODI, 10 Percy St, W1. **Details: Georgina Ashworth, CHANGE, 29 Gt James St. WC1. 01-405 3601.**

27 FEB LONDON 'Talking History', GLC Peace Year film by H. O. Nazareth, followed by discn chaired by Fred Halliday. 7pm ICA Cinema, The Mall, SW1. Tickets £1.40, box office 01-930 3647. Spkrs incl C. L. R. James, Joan Ruddock, Peter Bottomley MP.

27 FEB EALING Launch meeting for Ealing 'Defend London Campaign'. Spkrs Gerald Kaufman MP, George Tremlett (Tory GLC), Adrian Slade (GLC Lib.). 7.30pm Ealing Town Hall, New Broadway, W5.

25 FEB WIMBLEDON 'The Russians — a Quaker's View'. Spkr Mrs Ray Hainton. 8pm Drake House, St Georges Rd. Adm. free. **Org. Wimbledon Disarmament Coalition, 66 Lambton Rd, Raynes Pk, SW20.**

28 FEB LONDON 'Or shall we die?' — anti-nuclear oratorio by Michael Berkeley and Ian McEwan. LSO and Chorus at the Barbican. Tickets £2.50-£8, grp. discounts and student stand-by. **Box Office. 01-638 8891/628 8795.**

2 MAR LONDON Cabaret Benefit for Greenham Common, 7.30pm Chat's Palace, Brooksby's Walk, Homerton, E8. Tickets £2.50/£1.50 unwaged.

3 MAR OXFORD 'Arab-Israeli conflict and the Arms Race'. Day conf. Bernard Sunley Hall, St Catherine's College. Spkrs incl Ahmed Khalidi (Centre for Strategic Studies), Frank Barnaby (Arms expert), Patrick Seale (Observer), Claudia Wright (Washington corres. *New Statesman).* **Details: Robert Mabro, St Anthony's College.**

5 MAR LONDON 1984 Jose Marti International Work Brigade to Cuba introductory meeting 7.30pm County Hall, SE1. **Details: Britain-Cuba Resource Centre (Brigade), c/o 119 Burtnn Rd, SW9.**

7 MAR BIRMINGHAM Bruce Kent 7.30pm JCR, Polytechnic, Westbourne Rd, Edgbaston followed by CND benefit. **Org: WMCND.**

9 MARCH 1984 International Women's Day delegation to Armagh Prison, N. Ireland. (return Mon. 12 Mar). Picket prison 11 Mar. Approx. cost £45. Accomm. provided in Belfast. **Details: London Armagh Co-ord. Grp. 374 Gray's Inn Rd, WC1. Maggie: 01-289 3878 (day)**

10 & 11 MARCH OXFORD 'PATRIOTISM' — 2-day National Workshop on Ideology and myth in the making of English National Identity. **Tickets £6/£3 unwaged and details: s.a.e. to History Workshop Centre for Social History, Ruskin College, Oxford.**

12 MAR LONDON 'Shot down by the media: the fate of the Greenham Common women'. discn led by Helen John, 7pm Prince Albert, 37 Wharfdale Rd, N1. **Org. Journalists Against Nuclear Extermination. 01-278 7916.**

17 MAR LONDON Doctors for a Women's Choice on Abortion Open Meeting. 10am Small Hall, Camden Centre, Bidborough St, WC1.

17 MAR CARDIFF 'An Ageing Society: Challenge for Social Services'. 10am-5.30pm University College, Cardiff, Centenary Conference. Fee: £10 incl. lunch. **Details: Ms Pat Harris, Dept. of Social Admin, University College, PO Box 78, Cardiff CF1 1XL.**

17 MARCH SANDWELL Midlands Peoples Campaign for Jobs festival. **Details: Sandwell Unemployed People's Centre, 324 High St, W. Bromwich 021-525 5275.**

18 MARCH LONDON Dance & Music Benefit for Chile Comm. for Human Rights. 7.30pm Sadler's Wells Theatre. **01-837 7561.**

18-25 MAR LANCASTER Literary Festival, including Women's Day. **Further details from the Festival Office, 69 Church Street, Lancaster LA1 1ET. Phone 0524 62166.**

19 MARCH OXFORD 'The World After Nuclear War' one-day conf. Randolph Hotel. Norman Myers reporting on Washington Conference last Nov. £15 **Details & bkngs: Rm. 1209 Surrey House, Throwley Way, Sutton, Surrey SV11 4QQ.**

23-25 MARCH 'CND work in the regions' wkend conf. St. Francis Hall, University of Birmingham. **021-632 6009.**

24 MARCH LICHFIELD Day Conf. 'Psychological stress of nuclear age' Friary Grange. creche. **Contact Dr. Hazel Baker, Rockville, Cherry Orchard, Lichfield, Staffs.**

14-15 APRIL NOTTINGHAM 'Disarmament and Independent Foreign Policy for Britain' discn. conf. at Nottingham University. **Details: Anne Kestenbaum, Bernard Russell Peace Fdn. 0602 708318.**

Sorry, but we can't accept entries over the phone. Entries must be received by Friday preceding issue date. We reserve the right to exclude items without giving reasons and are not responsible for errors. Space is strictly limited so if you definitely want your item to appear, we suggest you book it as an ad. under the appropriate classified heading. See main heading for rates, etc.

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GROUPS/MEETINGS

AGAINST HURTING yourself, others and animals? This involves not creating children because human species still violent after million years existence. Also no tobacco, excess alcohol, religion, or eating animals. Form a pen club around these ideas. Box 7622.

'ALICE BAILEY': Planetary Plan for new order (Incoming 7th Cosmic Ray). Course 24-26 Feb. Medhope, Tintern, Gwent. 029-18 253.

CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS & BROADCASTING FREEDOM. 'A New Labour Daily? Media Alternatives in 1984'. Sun 26 Feb. 10-4, County Hall, London. Speakers from all levels of the Trade Union & Labour Movement and from the Women's & Black People's Movements. Further details from CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. 01-437 2795.

PROGRESSIVE LEAGUE, Woman Man Relationship Group, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. Thursday, 23 Feb. at 7.30. Dr Michael Perring of the Institute of Human Sexuality on 'Enhancement of Human Relationships'. 75p. Students half price, UB40 card holders FREE.

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Public Talk Sunday 19 Feb. 8 p.m. 'The Mystery of Death'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

'1984 AND HUMAN RIGHTS' – The Minority Rights Group's Annual Lecture by Theo Van Boven (former UN Director of Human Rights) 6 p.m. on 23 February at 10 St James's Square, London SW1 – admission free without ticket.

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Alan Sapper, Larry Gostin
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Thursday, 23 Feb., 7pm

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ACTIVE MAN, 50, seeks adventurous woman for caring, affectionate relationship and to share off-beat interests (motorcycling, for one) plus the usual cultural pursuits, country walks, etc. Left (but non-doctrinaire) politics, non-sexist, journalist, London. Box 7641.

A JEWISH male Ophthalmic Optician, single, 30, 5ft 11in., slim, good appearance, wishes to meet intelligent, humorous Jewish girl, in her twenties. London. Box 7623.

ARE YOU a lively minded individual, 18-80 enjoying the arts, discussions, conferences, rambles, dancing? The Progressive League caters for Mind, Body and intellectual Stimulus. And it's so cheap. Ring 01-452 8358.

ARTISTIC, BALDING chap desires extrovert female: gently humorous, imaginably juvenescent, knowingly liberated, moderately naughty, only partially quiescent, remainder sensual, totally uninhibited. Verbally waspish Xantippes, you're zapped. Box 7621.

ATTRACTIVE LADY, practical, fun-loving, widely travelled, loves classical music, theatre, seeks intelligent, middle-aged male, for warm *friendship. Photo appreciated.* Box 7532.

ATTRACTIVE, PROFESSIONAL man (58), divorced, loves arts, seeks attractive, intelligent, sensual, non-smoking woman, slim-medium, any race/circumstances, for warm friendship/enjoyments, preferably London/surrounding areas. Box 7582.

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN, 52, kind, unconventional, good listener, interested arts, seeks youthful contemplative man, anti rat-race, for possibly platonic friendship. London. Please write fully. Box 7632.

ATTRACTIVE, INTELLIGENT woman, late 30s, seeks kindred spirit (male), non-smoker, London/Home Counties, for genuine relationship. Over 5ft 9ins. Box 7630.

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DONNE, WIMSEY, Menuhin and Attenborough (D), have had my *unstinting affection* long enough! Small, bright, attractive woman, 33, now ready to forsake vicarious amour/for The Real Thing – and since he's not lurking in the NFT bar where is he? Box 7608.

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EASY-GOING WIDOWER, 63, bit fussy about personal cleanliness, otherwise normal. Seeking, for all the usual reasons, slim lady in her 40s, *nationality and colour immaterial.* NW London. Box 7609.

FELLOW, 40, 5ft 4ins, interested people, animals, countryside, village life, horticulture, 'The Good Life', seeks Princess to share Ruraldom. Box 7642.

FEMALE GRADUATE, 36, tallish, no uglier than most. Separated, divorcing, I need a nice, patient, intelligent man. All letters answered. Box 7629.

FRIENDLY BARITONE, intelligent, personable, 45, (*separated*), afloat SW London, seeks talented, attractive female classical accompanist (own piano), for musical enjoyment, creative pursuits and affection. Box 7626.

FROZEN-HANDED SOPRANO, 34 encores since her world premiere, seeks a Rodolfo to her Mimi, with a view to lyrical moments. Box 7643.

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HAMPSTEAD WOMAN, artistic, but not neurotic, mature outlook befitting a survivor, blonde, mid 30s, 5ft 8in, ready wit, looking for intelligent and self-aware male. Box 7590.

INDEPENDENT FEMALE, 46, South Devon, lacking day-to-day companionship in otherwise satisfactory lifestyle, seeks compatible male, for long-term relationship. Box 7633.

KNIGHT REQUIRED, armour optional, to rescue lady, forties, petite and slim, with busy professional life, home-loving, interests cultural/countryside, presently trapped in Box 7631.

LOVING WOMAN, happily independent, but needing someone to care about and share with, seeks similar man for caring, committed by unclaustrophobic relationship. Box 7640.

MALE GRADUATE, 42, seeks similar for friendship, preferably tall, slim(mish), perhaps bisexual, definitely non-camp/scene. Interested arts, countryside, ecology. North West/Yorks/London areas. Box 7620.

MALE TEACHER (Kent), 50, seeks attractive, female companion, initially for inexpensive Continental motoring holidays Easter/Summer. Interests: swimming, walking, good food and wine. Box 7625.

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LADY, 53, unemployed, unattached, creative, domesticated, seeks sympathetic, artistic gentleman, similar age and circumstances, humour, sincere, share warmth of friendship and garden *flat Chelsea*, rent own room. *Please* write fully first. Box 7604.

MEDICAL RESEARCHER, 38, male, Ph.D., secure job, musician, youthful, fit, introspective, intellectual pretentions, living in Staffs/Cheshire/Shropshire area, seeks woman for friendship/marriage. Box 7578.

NEIL KINNOCK look alike, 36, single, solvent, smoker, seeks female with lots of spare time for lasting relationship. Age, race, looks immaterial. London based. Box 7613.

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PRETTY, EXUBERANT Jewish woman, 46, is looking for a (bit younger?) man who is deeply interested in his own and others' psyches and human consciousness generally. To love and be loved by. Box 7612.

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TALL, CUDDLY male, 33, seeks a relationship with an older woman, 35-55. Looks, figure, status and race totally unimportant. Wales or any area. Box 7605.

UNIVERSITY LECTURER Economics, retired, living apart, home London, Country, Portugal, car, seeks intelligent, warm female, for caring relationship, arts, music, theatre, travel, dining out. Box 7594.

WEST INDIAN *triple graduate, requires a very* intelligent female friend, under 38, for meaningful relationship. She must be someone who enjoys life and unselfish. Box 7615.

WHITE MALE, 35, wishing to celebrate the end of four years imposed seclusion, seeks anti-authoritarian black female to enjoy same. Age irrelevant. Box 7606.

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